

Dennis Deletant

Ceausescu and the *Securitate*

Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989



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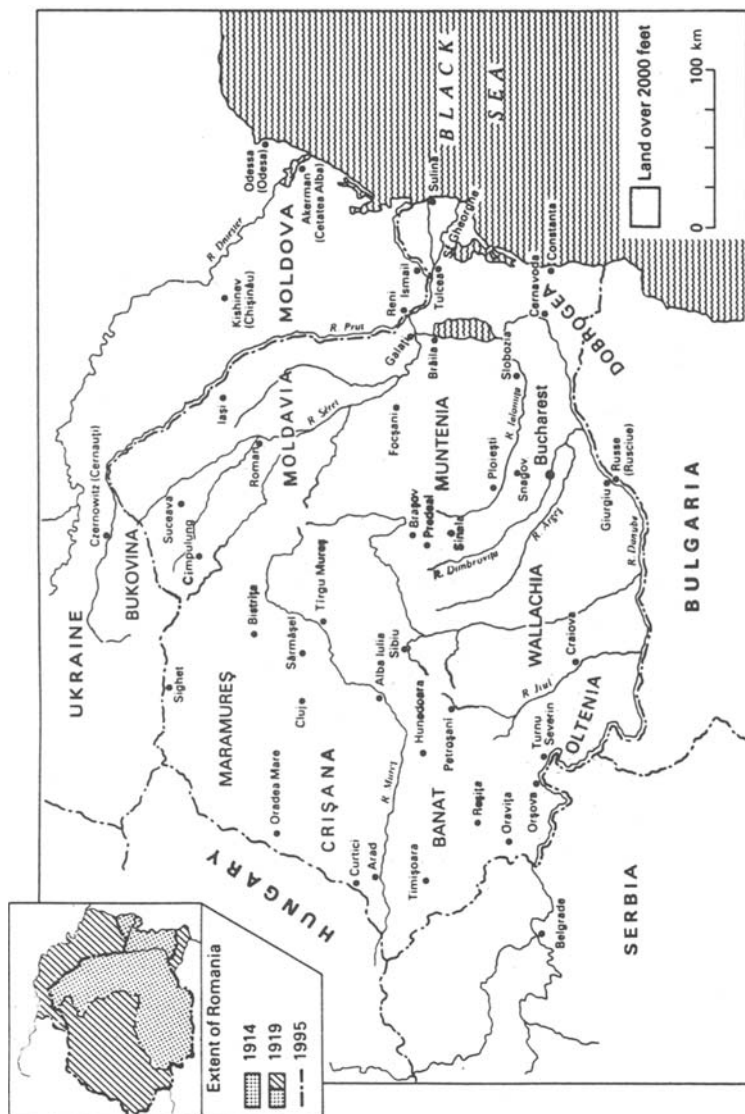
My greatest debt is to my wife, Andrea, and her parents, Micuța and Andrei Caracostea. They have been a continual source of insights into the Romanian mentality. My parents-in-law, despite imprisonment and losing everything, are proof that one can retain dignity and humanity through courage and a sense of humour. It is to them, and to the thousands like them, that this book is dedicated.

November 1994

DENNIS DELETANT

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Romania

PREFACE

An inescapable feature of life in Romania under Ceaușescu was the ubiquity of the *Securitate* or the security police, known officially for much of the period as the Department of State Security (*Departamentul Securității Statului* – DSS) of the Ministry of the Interior. I realized as much from my first contact with the country in 1965 and that realisation was reinforced during many subsequent visits. My professional and personal involvement with Romania encompassed the entire duration of Ceaușescu's rule, from 1965 until 1989, and it was inevitable that my frequent visits and my contacts with historians and writers should attract the *Securitate*'s attention. In view of my experience of Romania, it was therefore always a source of frustration to me that the literature on Romania's history since the imposition of Communist rule in 1945 said little about the mechanism of terror which Stalin used in Romania to enforce his will and about the organisation of the Department of State Security. This omission was, at first glance, perhaps surprising, given the importance of the institutionalised terror practised by the *Securitate* in buttressing the Communist regime, first under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and then under his successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu. Yet the structure and personnel of the body empowered to terrorise the population into acceptance of the legislation introduced to communise Romania, to arrest the 80,000 peasants who opposed the land reform of 1949, to imprison and torture the six Greek Catholic (Uniate) bishops and 600 priests who refused to accept union with the Romanian Orthodox Church in the winter of 1948 and, in Ceaușescu's time, to deport hundreds of miners from the Jiu Valley after their participation in the strike of August 1977, remained sketchy.

One might infer from this lack of information about the *Securitate* that as a political force, it was not significant; yet the very fact that Colonel General Alexandru Drăghici, who was appointed Minister of the Interior in 1952, was one of Ceaușescu's rivals

as successor to Gheorghiu-Dej in March 1965 shows the importance of the political platform offered by the Ministry in the 1950s and early 1960s. It was only by removing Drăghici from his power base that Ceaușescu was able to consolidate his own position as General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. The very fact that Ceaușescu's prime objective was to bring the Ministry of the Interior fully under Party and, ultimately, his own control was an indication of his priorities. This is not to suggest that the *Securitate* had always acted solely under Drăghici's orders. As shall be demonstrated, no major decision was taken in the early period of Drăghici's tenure of the Ministry of the Interior without the approval of a Soviet counsellor. But after Gheorghiu-Dej's rift with the Soviet Union in the early 1960s, Drăghici became virtually a law unto himself. Doubtless Ceaușescu had taken note. Throughout the Ceaușescu era the *Securitate*'s organization and activity remained shrouded in secrecy and, precisely because verifiable information was difficult to obtain, scholars of Romanian affairs, including this writer, gave the institution a wide berth.

There were other reasons for this neglect. First, some of the accounts given by victims of torture, prison and the labour camps are so dreadful as to defy belief, especially as Romanians were noted for their penchant for the dramatic. Secondly, there were no official Romanian sources against which to check these accounts. Finally, scholars were concerned that by using material uncorroborated by independent witnesses they ran the risk of accusation of being mere anti-Communist propagandists. The regime's careful control of foreign visitors enabled it to restrict the flow of information coming out of (and into) the country and thus what went on in Romania remained, until the late 1960s, largely unknown outside its borders. Until 1990, very little material of any kind on the labour camps and prisons appeared in the West and when it did, it was usually in Romanian *émigré* publications.

A glimpse behind the veil of secrecy covering the activities of the *Securitate* was provided by the racy revelations of Lieut. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa in his autobiographical *Red Horizons*.¹ Pacepa was one of the highest ranking officials of any Communist secret service ever to defect to the West, having been one of the heads of the *Departamentul de Informații Externe* (DIE), the

¹ Ion Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, London: Heinemann, 1988.

foreign intelligence service which formed part of the DSS. Pacepa had entered the counter-sabotage section of the DSS's forerunner, the *Direcția Generală a Securității Statului* (DGSS), in the early 1950s and was later sent to West Germany where it is alleged in Romanian circles that he was recruited by the CIA. That the public in the West was aroused to the excesses of the Ceaușescu family and to the assistance given by Romanian intelligence to Arab terrorist groups was in no small measure due to the impact that Pacepa's revelations had in his bestseller, published, it should be stressed, ten years after his defection to the United States in July 1978. In what the author called a diary, but was rather a patchwork of reminiscences covering the last months of his life in Romania, with excursions into the period before and after 1978, he paraded before the reader a catalogue of crimes, such as murder, blackmail, drug-smuggling and kidnapping, in which he described Ceaușescu's direct involvement.

The thrust of Pacepa's book was essentially a conspiracy theory. In 1972 Ceaușescu launched 'Operation Horizon', which was designed to win Western political support, loans and technology. According to Pacepa, Ceaușescu's autonomous stance in foreign policy was a deliberate ploy to mislead the West into thinking that Romania was a benevolent country and a 'maverick' in the Soviet bloc. The advantage of hindsight made this a very attractive theory but Pacepa failed to point out both that Gheorghiu-Dej's rejection of the Soviet Union's supranational pretensions antedated Operation Horizon by a decade and that Ceaușescu's refusal to join in the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 did more than anything to persuade the West of Ceaușescu's credentials as a leader who did not dance to Moscow's tune.

Furthermore, Pacepa completely overlooked the fact that in the wake of 1968 there was a convergence of interest on the part of Ceaușescu and the West: the former wished to underpin his authority by winning international respectability and trade while Western governments were content to see Western banks grant huge credits to Romania in the hope that increased economic links with the West would lead to the prising away of a former satellite from the orbit of the Soviet Union and to internal liberalisation. Unshakeable faith in these hopes blinded the West to the tyranny of Ceaușescu's internal policies, which it preferred to ignore, providing yet one more example of how human rights

have often taken second place to trade. In the light of the West's courtship of Ceaușescu, Pacepa's book made very uncomfortable reading.

He painted a shocking picture of the Ceaușescu family. Their behaviour was so distasteful that it was tempting to attribute to Pacepa's description of it the same talent with which he disseminated 'disinformation' or lies as part of Romanian intelligence practice; some Romanian exiles and experts in the West advised caution in reading it. Judging from its racy style there was every reason to believe that much of the book was ghost-written by Pacepa's mentors, the CIA, and that the timing of the publication was carefully chosen to discredit Ceaușescu and, just as important, to damage the chances of succession of his presumed heirs, his wife, Elena, and son, Nicu. That said, some of the family's antics were confirmed by independent witness after the 1989 Revolution.

Replete as it was with lurid detail, the book left a number of questions unanswered. It said virtually nothing about Pacepa's own background and his early career in the service of the Communist state. That service began before Ceaușescu came to power, but Pacepa did not reveal how long before. More important for the author's credibility were the questions of why he, as a self-declared practising Orthodox Christian, joined the DIE and how he reconciled his own involvement in loathsome activities with his professed belief? His answers might have helped to explain why a regime which he considered worse than Idi Amin's survived into its twenty-fifth year. What Pacepa did reveal by his defection and in his book is that in many cases the gulf between public posturing and personal feeling in Romania had become so wide that Ceaușescu was able to drive his policies through it unhindered.

Most of Pacepa's career was spent in the DIE, of which he himself says he became deputy head in 1972.² In his book he gave little information about the history and structure of the DIE and said virtually nothing about the other directorates of the DSS. Nevertheless, for anyone seeking an understanding of the intrusive part played by the DSS in Romanians' daily lives, Pacepa's book offers an introduction, for the activities of the DIE sometimes overlapped with those of the DSS.

² 'Pacepa vorbește din nou' (Pacepa speaks again), *Indiscret*, no. 4, Bucharest, 1992, p. 3.

Since the Revolution much new information has appeared about the work of the DSS. Most of it is in the form of personal memoirs describing the brutality of repression throughout the Communist period. Outlines of the *Securitate's* structure in 1989 have appeared in the popular press, most notably in a series of articles which the daily *Evenimentul Zilei* (The Event of the Day) carried in July 1993, but a detailed account of its history and organisation is still lacking. It was this *lacuna*, combined with my own personal experience of Romania and the opportunity to consult some *Securitate* files, that persuaded me to undertake this study. It is not simply a history of the *Securitate* but rather an examination of the part played by Ceauşescu's use of fear and coercion in maintaining himself in power and in suppressing opposition and dissent of any kind. In so far as the *Securitate* was the instrument of that fear and coercion, its activity will be studied, but there were other strategies used by Ceauşescu to perpetuate his power. These were appeals to nationalism and the pursuit of a semi-independent foreign policy. It was upon the success of these appeals that Ceauşescu was able to extract compliance from the rest of the population. In those cases where dissent was expressed, its course is charted and the steps taken to eliminate it noted. In doing so this work has also aimed to test the proposition of the Russian dissident, Andrei Amalrik, that 'no oppression can be effective without those who are prepared to submit to it'.

As with other machines of political terror the *Securitate's* most potent weapon was fear, and the depth of its inculcation into the Romanian population provides the principal reason for its success. Fear induces compliance and is therefore a tremendous labour-saving device. From the evidence which I have been able to gather about the manpower of the *Securitate*, its numbers were far smaller than popular myth would have us believe. Records indicate that in 1950, that is two years after its creation, the number of officers of all ranks in the General Directorate of People's Security (DGSP, antecedent of the DGSS), or *Securitate* for short, totalled almost 5,000. In December 1989 this number had risen to 15,312, according to the records of the DSS. By adding the security troops command (*Comandamentul Trupelor de Securitate*), which numbered 23,370 officers and men and was responsible to the DSS, the total personnel in the DSS at the

time of the 1989 Revolution was 38,682. The population of Romania at the time was 23 million.

By way of comparison, let us take the strength in 1989 of the East German Ministry of State Security, popular known as the *Stasi*, and bear in mind that the country's population was almost 17 million. The numbers employed in the security apparatus were 95,000, of whom 16,000 were security troops. The *Securitate*, then, was less than half the size of the *Stasi* and yet Romania's population exceeded that of East Germany by 6 million. But this disparity in officers masked the different degree of reliance placed by each state security organization on informants. In East Germany the number of informers in the *Stasi* records was revealed to be about 100,000. In the case of the DSS, the figure was in excess of 400,000, according to Virgil Măgureanu, the Director of the SRI (*Serviciul Român de Informații*), the new security service body established on 26 March 1990 as one of the successors to the *Securitate*. The DSS, then, was particularly well served by the Romanian public and the extent of collaboration with the security police bears out the commonly held belief amongst Romanians that the visible presence of suspect figures in public places during Communist rule represented mere drops in an ocean of informers. The motives for collaboration will be examined later in this book.

The *Securitate's* success in instilling fear into the population was also reflected in the creation of paranoia about its ubiquity and this paranoia was carried over into much of what was written about the DSS during the revolution, both in the Romanian and in the Western media. An example was furnished by the very way in which most Romanians used the word *Securitate* and its derivative *securist* (security policeman) as a blanket term to denote anyone employed by the Ministry of the Interior. Thus members of the police force (*miliția*), which included traffic and criminal investigation departments, the Passport Office and the prison service, were tarred with this brush. Some Romanians even extended *securist* to include those who occupied any administrative post, be it in a ministry, bank, hospital, collective farm or on the railway, such was the alleged ubiquity of their presence. Another instance of this paranoia was the customary attribution of the rank of 'colonel' to every *Securitate* officer; there were no lesser ranks.

A linguist by training, my research interests were initially in the history of the Romanian language and in its earliest written manifestations. These included the works of the Romanian chroniclers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries whose principal motive for writing was a self-confessed desire to affirm their national identity. Reading them brought the realization that language and history are related to politics, a view amply confirmed by the postures adopted under the Ceaușescu regime. My previous writing on Ceaușescu's Romania has included work on the manipulation of history and the role of writers under the regime. This research is incorporated in this book but the main inspiration here has been my contacts with Romanians and a shared experience of the Ceaușescu regime. For me that experience was shared for relatively brief periods and, as a British citizen, with the knowledge that the worst I could suffer for any offence given to the regime was eventual expulsion from the country, it was enough for me to appreciate the pressures under which my Romanian friends and relatives by marriage lived. They had no such escape and did not have the crutch of confidence that a Western passport offered. It is in this light that assessments of the behaviour of the population under Ceaușescu should proceed.

My Romanian friends were many and of various backgrounds and ages. They included writers, historians, engineers, doctors, peasant farmers, Party officials, students, pensioners, Hungarians, Saxons and Jews. Most were figures of light, a few of darkness, but I count it as a privilege to have known them. My friendship with them confirmed my distrust of generalisations about Romania, generalisations which continue to be made in the Western media about post-Ceaușescu Romania and which, if accepted, lead to flawed judgements. As Ceaușescu's despotic excesses increased in the 1980s, so too did condemnations of the Romanians as 'weak' and 'timorous'. Such accusations were based on what appeared to be an absence of challenge to the Communist regime in Romania when compared with the riots in Poland and East Germany in the early 1950s, the uprising in Hungary in 1956, the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 and the Solidarity movement of the 1970s. The unchallenged acceptance of such accusations is precisely a measure of the success of the *Securitate* in suppressing information about resistance to the regime. For example, virtually nothing was known in the West, even in *émigré* circles, of the courageous struggle

in the Carpathian mountains of two small bands of self-styled partisans, led by the ex-army officers Gheorghe Arsenescu and Toma Arnăuoiu, who resisted arrest for nine years from 1949 to 1958. The purpose of this book is not to argue that challenges to Communist authority in Romania were as widespread or as serious as in some of the other Soviet satellites but rather to dispel the general impression that there was no dissent in Romania under Communist rule.

I was made aware of the *Securitate's* existence during my very first visit to Romania in July 1965. As a British Council-sponsored participant at a Romanian language summer school, I was quartered along with some eighty other students from various countries in former army barracks, previously used by units of the Red Army, at the summer school's centre in Sinaia. This mountain resort is situated some 150 km. north of Bucharest, and access to the barracks and to the former gambling casino, used as the lecture theatre, was allowed only to authorised persons. On the Romanian side, these were officials from the Ministry of Education, teachers and 'group leaders' who were assigned to contingents of students by language. Thus the American and British students were entrusted to the care of Nicolae Lupu, an English-speaking journalist from the Communist Party daily *Scînteia*, and he was responsible for making sure that we did not stray from the school compound. Unauthorised Romanians were kept out by armed guards in civilian clothes who carried automatic weapons and regularly patrolled the access points to the school area which, in addition to the barracks and casino, included the adjacent former royal palaces of Peleş, Pelişor and Foişor.

My natural curiosity, fortified by my rudimentary knowledge of Romanian which I had been studying for six months at London University and which I was anxious to practise with a native speaker, drove me to engage one of the guards in conversation. He wore what I later came to recognise as virtually regulation dress for a security policeman: a black leather jacket (or black knee-length leather coat in inclement weather). Asked why he carried a gun so visibly, he replied that it was to deter anyone from disturbing our privacy since we students were guests of the Romanian government. I told him that one of my reasons for coming to the school was in the hope of being able to meet

Romanians of my own age and that under such conditions of security it was impossible to do so. He smiled and said that there were still 'Fascist elements' around in the country whose aim was to spread damaging propaganda about 'Romanian realities' and that therefore it would be more instructive for me to stay in the summer school compound rather than venture out.

I did not heed his advice. During the course of my month's stay in Sinaia I did descend into the town where people of all ages stared at my clothes and, in particular, at my shoes. The latter, I learned, were the conclusive hallmark of a Westerner, since Romanian items of clothing were uniform. Only on one occasion did a trio of young Romanians in Sinaia summon up the courage to ask me where I was from. On hearing that I was British, they asked me about the latest records by the Beatles and for Romanian translations of snatches of the lyrics. These I gave in my faltering Romanian and, feeling that they were in my debt, I enquired why no ordinary Romanians came up to the summer school complex. They laughed, looked around and invited me to walk with them. 'You see', they said, 'we live in a Socialist country and here the state maps out your life for you from birth. You are assigned a school, you are assigned a job and you are assigned a place to live. Conformity is the rule, you do what you are told and if your expectations are limited and you don't step out of line, then you will be satisfied. And to make sure that you don't step out of line they have the *Securitate*.' With that they looked around sheepishly once more, said goodbye, and walked away.

That was the first and only mention of the secret police during my carefully stage-managed stay but, taken together with my observations in the resort, it was enough to puncture the bubble of socialist achievement with which the practical classes in the Romanian language and the lectures on Romanian history and literature were inflated. The brief encounter with this trio and the reference to 'they have the *Securitate*' showed that, while the uniformity of clothing might be interpreted as a symbol of that conformity which the Communist regime had sought to impose upon the people, there were some who saw the authorities as aliens and who did not share their values. Despite attendance at a second summer school in 1967, I got no closer to such

people, being carefully shepherded, along with other foreign students, by the same 'group leaders' whom I now realised were *Securitate* agents. Our experience was not unlike that of the novelist V.S. Pritchett, who visited the country in 1964.³

It was only in 1969, when I took up a nine-month postgraduate scholarship awarded by the British Council that I was able to travel in the country unescorted, though not unshadowed. In most of the bars and coffee-houses frequented by students there was the resident eavesdropper, who placed himself at an adjacent table with stock-in-trade newspaper. But in the comparative freedom and optimism of that year, when Ceaușescu's stock internationally remained at its highest following his defiant condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia the previous August, I was befriended by a number of Romanian students whose parents, in the privacy of their homes, felt confident enough to reveal to me some of the iniquities of the Communist past. What I had only learned second-hand from harrowing memoir literature published in the West about the Communist period in Romania was now graphically described to me by victims of Gheorghiu-Dej's terror: the arrests of those who were unaware that they had committed a crime, the appearances before a court whose proceedings were incomprehensible, the presentation of charges which were fictitious, all were features of *The Trial*, showing the remarkable prophetic quality of Franz Kafka's novel.

While impressed by my hosts' guarded optimism that terror as an instrument of coercion was a thing of the past, any temptation on my part to believe that under Ceaușescu the totalitarian state had relaxed its grip on society was dispelled by the ransacking of my room in a closely watched hostel for foreign students during the visit of President Nixon in August 1969. As an interpreter and fixer for the American news network, ABC, during the visit, I was doubtless suspected by the *Securitate* of having acquired

³ 'Rumania irritates one from the start. Together with Czechoslovakia, it is the most rigid of the satellite countries. As a visitor, you are compelled to have a guide, and the guide dogs your every step. When you emerge from your bedroom in the morning, he is waiting for you. He bores you the whole day long. He is informative by nature, but humourless, tends to be didactic and knows everything. I could not escape the impression that shrewd dissimulation and a reactionary mentality are widespread.' Quoted from F. Bondy, 'Rumanian Travelogue', *Survey*, no. 55 (April 1965), p. 22.

sensitive information yet the only thing taken from my room was a copy of the New Testament in Romanian. The incident, nevertheless, reminded me that I was rarely alone.

My greatest insights into the inequity of the Communist regime under Gheorghiu-Dej resulted from my friendship with, and then my engagement to, Andrea Caracostea. Courtship of a Romanian girl was considered by the authorities a valid reason for visiting a Romanian's home and although my future father-in-law, a university professor, and some of his neighbours told me that they were regularly asked by *Securitate* agents about my movements, no attempt was ever made to discourage me.

From my fiancée and her parents I learned about one family's suffering under Communist rule, an experience that was typical of most people of their background. My father-in-law's father, Dumitru Caracostea, the first professor of Romanian literature at the University of Bucharest, had been arrested in Bucharest at the age of seventy-one in September 1950 as one of a group of former ministers from the pre-Communist period. He was taken from his flat during the night by a team of *Securitate* agents, placed in a van and driven 650 km. to the northern town of Sighet to a prison. Because of its proximity to the Soviet Union, this prison was chosen specifically by the regime for those whom it considered its most dangerous opponents. Caracostea joined some 180 members of Romania's pre-war ruling élite, among them four former prime ministers and the bishops of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches. Like Caracostea, most of these prisoners were over sixty and had never been tried. Prisoners were usually placed two in a cell and were required to carry out menial duties, such as cleaning the floors and collecting water from a hand-pump in the courtyard. They were punished for the slightest deviation from prison rules, such as a ban on speaking during exercise. Transgressors, among whom was Caracostea, were flogged and made to act as a 'horse' while jailers vaulted over them.

Caracostea was eventually freed on 6 July 1955. There are blank spaces on his certificate of release against the number of the arrest warrant and the reason for his detention, proof from the authorities themselves that there was no legal basis for his arrest or for the five years of his imprisonment. During his term in jail his son, my father-in-law, was himself arrested in April

1952 and sent to a labour camp at Borzești in Moldavia for eighteen months. He too was never put on trial and the only reason he was given for being taken away from his flat, again during the night, was 'because he was the son of a former minister'. He later learned that instructions had gone out from the Ministry of the Interior for twenty adult sons and daughters of former ministers to be arrested on a particular night; those that happened to be at home were picked up, those that were not escaped the trawl.

With her husband in detention, my mother-in-law was forced to seek work in order to support her two young daughters. This was no easy task since institutions were forbidden to employ persons of 'unhealthy origin', the jargon for those who had owned property and private wealth before the war. As a daughter of one of the the largest wine producers in Romania before the Communist takeover, my mother-in-law found it particularly difficult to secure a job, being refused on numerous occasions because of her background. Not only were her family's vineyards and other assets confiscated without compensation in 1948 but her flat was also 'nationalised' and she was forced to pay rent to the state on a property that her family had built. Eventually a manager took pity on her circumstances and, turning a blind eye to her background, took her on as a manual worker in a Ministry of Defence factory producing gasmasks. Fortunately, my father-in-law was released after eighteen months in the camp and reinstated in his post as a lecturer at Bucharest Polytechnic so she was then able to give up her job.

Experience of a labour camp under Gheorghiu-Dej and of brutish Ministry of Interior officers and guards gave my father-in-law confidence in preparing me for tackling the labyrinthine processes of the Ministry of the Interior, for it was upon this Ministry's goodwill that Andrea's chances of a future with me depended. In order to marry a foreigner, a Romanian citizen required the signature of Nicolae Ceaușescu himself as head of the Council of State. It was to this body that a Romanian had to submit an application to marry a foreign citizen. Applications were then vetted by an officer from the DIE to establish whether the foreign partner worked in his or her country in an area of interest to the Romanian service. In cases where they did, a *Securitate* agent contacted the applicant and asked them whether

they would be prepared to pass on information once they had settled in the foreign country. It was intimated to the applicant that refusal to co-operate could mean a denial of permission to marry. My wife was harrassed in this way but, as fortune had it, she was spared further questioning by the *Securitate* because her application was approved without, it appears, completion of this vetting. As so often happens in human affairs, it is individuals you know who can cut through the red tape of an anonymous bureaucracy and expedite matters. A scholar at the Institute of South East European Studies who knew of my wish to get married offered to intervene on my wife's behalf with the secretary of the State Council, Constantin Stătescu, since he and Stătescu had been school friends. I eagerly accepted the offer and was told later that Stătescu placed my wife's application among the thirty or so which were included with other miscellaneous business requiring Ceauşescu's approval and signature at the end of each meeting of the State Council, held every three or four months. Instead of having to wait the usual six months for permission to marry a foreign subject, my wife received permission in four, at the end of December 1972.

As an example of how wary one should be of judging everything in Ceauşescu's Romania in purely black and white terms, this episode was typical of my experience. The scholar in question was Virgil Căndeia, who a short while afterwards was appointed to be head of *Asociația României*, the body created by the Communist Party for disseminating pro-regime propaganda among Romanian *émigrés* and alleged by some to have had close links with the DIE. Mr Căndeia's subsequent career was a disappointment to me and possibly to him, for his gesture towards me showed a benevolent nature which his later duties must have required him to suppress.

In a country where the abnormal is normal, I was foolish to harbour the belief that, once married, my bride would automatically be given a passport to accompany me to Britain. Having picked up an application form from the Passport Office of the Ministry of the Interior on Nicolae Iorga Street in Bucharest at the beginning of January 1973, Andrea found that the officer on duty refused to accept the completed document from her. My father-in-law then advised me to write a memorandum to the commandant of the office, stating who I was and why my

wife needed a passport and to hand it in and obtain a receipt. He helped me to compose the text which mentioned that I was often asked to lecture to British audiences about Romania and that if my wife was not granted a passport, my disappointment would inevitably be reflected in my texts. Andrea, given her family's experiences at the hands of the Ministry of the Interior, was too nervous to accompany me to the passport office and so I went alone, blustering my way past the armed sentry by claiming to be from the British Embassy and requesting to see the commandant. I was directed to a side room full of stony-faced Romanians seated on wooden benches. On the walls were pinned posters in large black letters warning of the penalties for attempting to cross the frontier without a passport and below them, to ram home the message, photographs of those who had been caught doing so, with a caption beneath indicating the prison sentences they had received. After about half an hour, during which not a word was uttered, a short, portly, balding major came out of the office marked 'commandant' and proceeded to ask what was the business of each person present. Using the familiar and condescending form of 'you', he dismissed every applicant curtly, ordering them to come back at another date. He turned to me last of all, once the others had gone. I drew myself to my full height, which was some inches above him, and when he addressed me with a surly, 'What's your business, then?', replied that I was from the British Embassy and had a memorandum to deposit in support of my wife's request for a passport. I proffered the envelope but he did not even look at it, instead saying that he could not receive it. I insisted that unless it was received I would take the matter up elsewhere. This seemed to shake him and he took the memorandum. He went into the office marked 'Commandant' and five minutes later came out with the instruction that I should return with my wife at six o'clock the following morning.

At the appointed time in a sub-zero temperature, Andrea and I went back. Apart from the sentry at the door of the building, there was no other sign of life. We went gingerly into the side room. After a few minutes the major appeared and ushered us into the commandant's office. He then withdrew. The only light in the room came from a powerful table-lamp which was directed on two chairs in front of a desk. Behind the desk we could

make out a man in his early fifties in a dark suit, dark tie and dark glasses. He invited us to sit down and then demonstratively pored over what we presumed to be my memorandum. Without acknowledging my presence at all, he told my wife to go to Room 15 in the adjacent building where she could collect her passport. Andrea said a word of thanks and in a couple of minutes the meeting was over.

This progress seemed too good to be true and indeed it was. When we got to Room 15, we were invited in by a dour-looking woman of about fifty with greying hair swept back into a bun. She had obviously been forewarned of our arrival for she handed my wife a single sheet of paper with a list of documents which she had to submit in order to be issued a passport.

These are the papers you must obtain. There are thirty-five of them, all affidavits stating that you have no debts to any state agencies such as the gas company, the electricity board, the rent office, etc. For each affidavit you will have to make an application to the relevant agency, authorised by the state notary.

Our hearts sank when we realised the bureaucratic hill we now had to climb.

It is here that the extended family really came into its own in surmounting the obstacles placed in our path by the state. Aunts and uncles, cousins and friends who had contacts in each of the institutions and agencies from which we required an affidavit all sprang into action. We gave a notary a generous supply of foreign cigarettes and she assiduously typed up and authorised the necessary applications. Within three days, we managed to obtain all thirty-five documents and on a Saturday morning returned triumphantly to the lady in Room 15. She congratulated us on our diligence but then, looking down the list, heaved a sigh of regret. 'I am so sorry. There is one document you require which is not on this list.' Our faces dropped. 'Is it that important, is it really necessary?', we asked in unison. 'I'm afraid that it is. It is an affidavit from the university saying that you have no gymshoes borrowed from the physical education department.' 'But I have never done physical education', Andrea protested. 'I'm sorry. I still need the paper.'

I was certain that this was merely her way of asserting her

importance by inventing a pretext for making us dependent upon her goodwill. My wife might be travelling to the West, but before she did so she would have to yield to the authority of this ageing woman who, because of her position in the Ministry of the Interior, was denied the possibility of foreign travel. Envy was translated into a need to demonstrate power and it was this sentiment that fuelled many of the conflicts which I was later to have with individuals within the Romanian bureaucracy. Andrea and I dashed off to the university where a sympathetic dean of studies expressed amazement at our request and duly produced the requisite piece of paper. Within an hour we were back at the Passport Office. In a final act of theatrical suspense, our taskmistress leafed through a filing drawer full of passports and declared that my wife's was not there. I then had the presence of spirit to say, 'I am sure that a Ministry such as yours which is celebrated for its efficiency could not possibly have mislaid a passport.' She turned to me and smiled. 'I can see, Mr Deletant, that you have learned a lot in our country.' She went over to her desk, opened a drawer and handed my wife her passport. Andrea was so overcome with emotion that she gave the startled lady a kiss on both cheeks and I, after kissing her hand, led my wife from the room. In the corridor outside, we discovered that the exit visa in the passport was valid only for departure by air. We went back in and told the lady. 'I am so sorry, you will have to come back on Monday to have it changed. Today is only a half-day. Here is the name of the major you must see.'

At 7 a.m. on the Monday, we enquired after the major responsible for exit visas. He was most understanding when we explained that we intended to leave the country by car and within a quarter of an hour had added the frontier point of Stamora Moravița on the border with Yugoslavia to the exit visa. He wrote on the visa the number of my car and we set off that very morning before, as Andrea feared, the authorities could put another obstacle in our path. We drove all day and reached the frontier at 11 p.m. on 15 January. The post was deserted, except for a soldier who emerged from the customs building and signalled us to pull over. Snow was falling as an officer appeared from the same building, requested our passports and asked me to open the back of the station wagon. We told him that we had just got married and after he took one look at the cartons of books, crockery

and clothes, motioned with his hand for me to close the tailgate. The snow was now quite heavy and the officer invited us into the building while he crossed the concourse to the gatehouse. We followed him with our eyes as he picked up the telephone, doubtless checking with Bucharest that my wife's exit visa was valid. Anxious not to reveal any signs of nervousness we averted our gaze and decided to take advantage of the toilets in the building.

After an interval of about half an hour, the officer came back and handed us our passports. '*Drum bun, să trăiți* ('Safe journey, sir')', he said in military parlance and saluted. As we turned to get into the car we noticed that some words had been scrawled in the snow that had gathered on the back window. They read '*Casa de piatră*' ('house of stone'), meaning a sound marriage. We looked back at the officer. He gave a broad grin and a tear trickled down Andrea's cheek. Here was the real face of Romania, a warmth of spirit which rose over the surface of the stony exterior presented by officialdom. There was no envy from this officer of the Ministry of the Interior, only a natural affection.

I have described this experience in detail because it highlights some of the ambiguities and contradictions which are fostered in human behaviour by the totalitarian state. By appealing to ties of friendship and family or to naked self-interest, a person could circumvent the strictures of the regime. These very same qualities also underpinned the dissimulation which V.S. Pritchett mentioned earlier, for in Romanian society under Ceaușescu citizens lived a duplicitous existence. Every day they were obliged to strike a balance between the demands of 'official' life and the attempt to lead an 'unofficial one'. This double game played with the regime, relatives, friends and the opposite sex is powerfully portrayed in Paul Goma's novel *Bonifacia*,⁴ although the fact that the novel was written and published in exile speaks for itself. The ambiguity of living in Ceaușescu's Romania is a major theme of his writing and, even before he was forced to leave the country, Goma listed examples of dissimulation in one of his open letters to the President. It is a posture central to the discussion of compliance in this book and I shall not dwell upon it here.

I wish rather to return to my personal experience of Romania

⁴ Paul Goma, *Bonifacia*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1986.

in order to provide instances of the regime's persistent denial of certain fundamental freedoms and its use of the Ministry of the Interior and the *Securitate* to control every major aspect of citizen's lives. At the beginning of February 1975, my mother-in-law submitted a request for a passport to travel to Britain to be with my wife who was expecting our first child. Annexed to her request was a medical certificate from our doctor saying that my mother-in-law's presence at the time of birth would be desirable. It was only at the end of April that my mother-in-law received a response – a rejection of her application. On 28 April, I wrote to Ceaușescu, asking him to intervene and to authorise the issue of a passport. No action was taken. In June, two weeks after my wife had given birth, I wrote to my local MP, Tony Newton, who took up the matter with Roy Hattersley, at that time Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Mr Hattersley raised the problem with the Romanian Ambassador to Britain and within a fortnight my mother-in-law was summoned to the passport office in Bucharest and given a passport. Barely two months later Ceaușescu put his signature to the Helsinki Final Act, which, under the section 'Cooperation in Humanitarian and Other Fields, 1: Human Contacts (a)', stated:

In order to promote further development of contacts on the basis of family ties the participating States will favourably consider applications for travel with the purpose of allowing persons to enter or leave their territory temporarily, and on a regular basis if desired, in order to visit members of their families.

From my own experience, Ceaușescu's signature on this document meant nothing. In February 1979 I invited both my parents-in-law, who were pensioners, to spend the summer with my family, as my wife was expecting a second child. My mother-in-law received her passport in June but my father-in-law's application was rejected without explanation. I again got in touch with my local MP, John Loveridge, who approached Douglas Hurd, then Minister of State at the FCO, who in turn instructed the British Embassy in Bucharest to take up the case. My MP also wrote to the Romanian Ambassador in London. In November, the Romanian Ambassador informed Mr Loveridge that the Romanian authorities had not approved my father-in-law's application to travel to Britain. The FCO made further representations in

Bucharest and finally, in February 1980, one year after my invitation had been sent, my father-in-law was granted a passport. In the spring of 1983 I was faced with exactly the same problem and had to go through the same procedures before the passport authorities in Bucharest were willing to issue passports to my parents-in-law.

There is one further incident with the Romanian authorities which I wish to recount for two reasons. First, because it highlights the courage of Corneliu Coposu, now President of the National Peasant Party (NPP), and secondly, the inherent good-nature in many Romanians. In August 1986 I took my two young children to Bucharest and deposited them with their grandparents while I pursued some research into British contacts with Iuliu Maniu, the head of the NPP, during the Second World War. My Romanian colleagues told me that a key person to talk to on this subject was Corneliu Coposu, Maniu's secretary. I was given his telephone number but warned at the same time that his house was under surveillance by the *Securitate* because the poker evenings that Coposu arranged with his septuagenarian friends were regarded as a cover for reviving the NPP. I telephoned Mr Coposu, explaining briefly who I was, and we agreed a time when I should go to his house. He then warned me that his home was watched and I said that if he was kind enough to receive me, then I was unconcerned by what others might think.

As I approached his house at Strada Mămulari 19 at the appointed time one morning, I realised that any attempt at disguising my visit was out of the question. The two-storey building was one of the only remaining structures still standing in an area which had been levelled in preparation for the construction of Ceaușescu's new civic complex. I rang the doorbell and a tall, imposing figure with close-cropped grey hair and a cigarette dangling from the corner of his mouth opened the door. Behind me was the demolition zone from which huge bulldozers were scooping earth and bricks, and dump-trucks were rumbling past. As I was beckoned in, so too entered an uninvited cloud of dust. The room into which I was ushered was dim, the shutters were drawn against the noise and dirt outside, and the only light came from a table lamp with the regulation 40-watt bulb for economy. The presence of a shadowy figure in a corridor from the room leading to a kitchen added to the conspiratorial atmosphere. Mr Coposu

introduced the figure as his sister, who smiled and withdrew into the kitchen. She reappeared some two hours later through the mist produced by Mr Coposu's chain-smoking with a cup of Turkish coffee which I eagerly gulped down. There were shades of Miss Havisham in that room and meeting, although Coposu, despite his prison ordeal, betrayed no signs of decrepitude or resignation. If any Romanian is the embodiment of the triumph of conscience over coercion, of dignity over debasement, of sincerity over sycophancy, then it is Corneliu Coposu.

He offers a paradigm for the fate of opponents of Communism. Arrested in July 1947 as a member of the National Peasant Party, he spent seventeen years in various jails, withstanding beatings and solitary confinement. His memory was remarkable, and in the three hours that I spent with him he related details of Maniu's clandestine links with the British during the wartime Antonescu dictatorship. He had an appetite for recalling the past and had I not interrupted our meeting, through fear of being considered insensitive by his sister, he would have continued. To my request for a second interview, he readily agreed and proposed a time later that week. When I returned the first thing he said was that he had been visited by a colonel in the *Securitate*. This was not unusual, for ever since his release from prison he had been questioned on a regular basis about his movements and visitors he received. The colonel had, it seemed, been concerned that Coposu had discussed with me the contemporary situation in Romania and that I had been used as a messenger by Coposu to seek help for the revival of the Peasant Party. Coposu warned me that I would be searched on my departure and that the notes which I had taken, albeit innocuous, should be put in a safe place.

Coposu was not the only person to alert me. An official from the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, under whose auspices I conducted the official part of my programme, invited me to lunch the day before my departure. He told me that he had been informed about my visits to Coposu and that I had put his institution, as a creation of the Communist Party, in an embarrassing position. I told him that the visits were private, that I initiated the contact with Coposu and that since he was a pensioner and had no association with the regime, apart from being its

victim, I could not see the reason why there should be any embarrassment. He replied:

The attention of the *Securitate* has been drawn to you and, by extension, to our institution, since we were expected to inform them of your intentions. To avoid even greater embarrassment, please make sure that when you leave you do not have any compromising documents on your person, because we know that they will search you at the airport.

I thanked him for the warning and we dropped the subject.

I was indeed searched on my departure. After I had checked in my baggage and completed customs with my children, we were stopped at passport control and taken to one side. A militia major politely asked me to go to a room in the customs hall where a female customs officers was instructed to search our baggage and take any papers she found. The major asked me where our suitcases were and I told him that they had already been checked in. With a sigh of resignation, he told me to hand my remaining hold-all to the customs officer and left. The children asked me in Romanian why we had been singled out for inspection and this obviously made an impression on the customs officer. She expressed admiration that they, being foreigners, had learned the language and was even more sympathetic when I told her my wife was from Bucharest. My bag was full of research notes on various subjects, including some on a nineteenth-century Jewish bookseller from Iași, and as she began to finger her way through the hand-written pages, she asked me to choose the material to take to the major. I handed her over these notes and off she went. After about half an hour, she returned with them and said that we could go. The children waved and we went into the departure lounge without, however, our passports and boarding cards which the major had taken away. The flight was called and the other passengers were taken to the aircraft while we waited. The children began to get agitated but I calmed them by explaining that we would simply return to their grandparents if the plane left without us. I fully expected the plane to take off but it remained on the tarmac, its engines silent. Some twenty minutes elapsed before the major finally appeared clutching our documents in his hand. He apologised for the inconvenience, explained that he was only obeying orders and said that he hoped

that I would not think unkindly of the country. I was too intent on rushing down to the departure gate and out to the bus to give a reply. A bus was waiting to speed us out to the aircraft where hostile gazes from innocent British passengers lined our passage to our seats.

I was to be searched on subsequent occasions in 1987 and 1988, even though I did not see Coposu again until after Ceaușescu's downfall, but after this experience in 1986 neither my wife nor my children visited the country again until after the Revolution. My wife had already been horrified by the destruction in central Bucharest and the misery of daily life, the food queues, the restrictions on heating and lighting and simply found visits too depressing. I continued to go out of a feeling of solidarity with my friends, particularly those who were desperate for contacts with Britain (and with the BBC Romanian Service!). My father-in-law made no secret of his opinion of Ceaușescu, frequently denouncing him in telephone calls to us in Britain as a *nerod* ('idiot') and using three epithets for Elena: *rea*, *ambicioasă* and *incultă* ('evil' 'ambitious' and 'uneducated'). His imprecations prompted a neighbour, a lieutenant-colonel in the *Securitate*, to offer a friendly word of caution to him but it had no effect. This behaviour, coupled with my friendship with figures such as Andrei Pippidi and Dinu Giurescu, who had registered their disapproval of Ceaușescu's reconstruction projects in Bucharest, meant that I had to be circumspect in my contacts in Bucharest.

The question often went through my mind after 1986 whether I should break my anonymity and join the public outcry about Romania, for my only published pieces drawing attention to the plight of the Romanians had been anonymous in order to protect my parents-in-law. But even that consideration lost much of its validity, given my father-in-law's outbursts over the telephone. When I was first asked in 1987 to comment on Ceaușescu's policies on the BBC World Service, I did so unambiguously then and in several subsequent interviews and fully expected as a consequence to be denied a visa to return to Romania. To my surprise, I was given a visa on the spot in September 1988 by the Romanian Embassy in London and took advantage of the trip to see, among others, Pippidi, Mircea Dinescu, Andrei Pleșu and Ștefan Augustin Doinaș. It was during this visit, my last before the Revolution, that Dinescu, whom I had known

and translated since 1985, told me of his problem with the Romanian authorities following his declarations in the Soviet Union and his intention to make a stand against the regime should publication of his latest manuscript volume of poems be denied. I promised him that in the event of any measures being taken against him, I would draw attention to them in the British press.

My observations of that visit were encapsulated in an article in *The Times*, which appeared on 8 October 1988 under the by-line 'From a Special Correspondent'. It did not take the authorities long to work out who the author was, for shortly afterwards a British friend who had returned from Bucharest telephoned me with advice from a Romanian Foreign Ministry official that I should not return. 'He's number seven on the list', was the ambiguous warning given by the official and clearly this was not a reference to Ceaușescu's list of New Year's greeting cards. After twenty-four years of shadow-boxing with the *Securitate*, the prospect of firmer action against me now loomed. I prepared myself for a long interval of exile from my second home, only to be caught completely off-guard by the sequence of events in Timișoara and Bucharest which led to Ceaușescu's overthrow. I was even able to claim a presence in Romania in 1989 for, thanks to BBC Television, and especially John Simpson, I was able to return to Bucharest on 29 December and to indulge myself, perhaps misguidedly, in the idea of a Romania without the *Securitate*. The existence of this book is, at least in part, a measure of how far the straitjacket of totalitarian control has been removed from Romania, for without the cooperation of certain figures in the security services there, I would not have had access to a number of *Securitate* files.

We have now come to the question of my sources for the organisation of the *Securitate*. A few words of clarification about them will help to establish the status of my information. Published materials, as I have indicated, provide only a fragmentary account of the *Securitate*'s history and organization. I have completed some of the missing details by consulting for the years 1948 to 1978 a mimeographed history of the Ministry of the Interior, produced for in-house use, entitled *Organizarea și Funcționarea Organelor Ministerului de Interne de la Înființare Până în prezent* (Bucharest: Ministry of the Interior, 1978). This is principally a register of legislation regarding the Ministry but also provides a useful chronicle of

structural changes to the Department of State Security. For the *Securitate's* organisation in the years from 1978 to 1989, I have preferred to rely on private sources rather than on the public statements of officials, many of which I have discovered in the course of my researches to be misleading. To those sources who prefer to remain anonymous I extend my thanks.

November 1994

POLICE TERROR AND THE IMPOSITION OF COMMUNIST RULE

Police terror is an intrinsic feature of totalitarianism, and Communist rule in Romania confirmed this. Terror was the instrument wielded by all the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe as the means of implementing the Marxist – Leninist revolution. The destruction of an existing society and the creation of a new one was achieved by a single mass party, composed of an elite and dedicated membership whose targets were central control and direction of the economy, a technologically perfected monopoly of the media and complete direction of the armed forces. The task assigned to the police was to remove the ‘enemies’ of the regime and those classes of the population who were considered an obstacle to the centralized running of the economy. This programme was initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej (hereafter, Dej) after 1945. It was the inheritance of Nicolae Ceauşescu.

In Romania, police terror was used in two stages, first to eliminate opponents in the drive to consolidate power and secondly to ensure compliance once revolutionary change had been effected. Broadly speaking, the first stage encompassed the years from 1945 until 1964, when there was an amnesty of political prisoners; the second ran from 1964 until 1989. There was a perceptible change in the degree of repression exercised by the regime after 1964, which resulted from the rift with Moscow. Until the final year of the Dej era, terror embraced the whole of Romanian society, searching for actual or potential opponents of totalitarian conformity, and many citizens had the sense that they were being hunted. After 1964, Romanians were marked by fear rather than terror of the *Securitate*, for the Ceauşescu regime, for all its appalling abuses of human dignity and disrespect for human rights, never repeated the tactics of mass arrests and wholesale deportations

which were a feature of most of Dej's rule. The latter had done his work too well.

Romania came under Communist control as a direct consequence of its participation in the Second World War and of the policies of the Alliance which defeated Romania's ally, Nazi Germany. In 1939, Romania proclaimed its neutrality. That it thereafter became an ally of Germany was due entirely to the policies of the Soviet Union, especially during the period when Russia was Germany's ally and Romania was not.

The Romanian state, the object of the policies of these two major powers, had been created at the end of the First World War in circumstances which left it vulnerable to external pressures. Through the peace treaties, Romania increased its national territory by acquisitions from Hungary (Transylvania), Bulgaria (southern Dobrogea) and Russia (Bessarabia and northern Bukovina). With the territories, of course, came non-Romanian populations, and the policies of Romanian governments in the 1920s did little to reconcile them to their minority status.

From 1919, Romanian foreign policy aimed at consolidating the gains and keeping all the new frontiers intact. To that end, it relied upon France and upon the League of Nations. By the late 1930s, both aims had been largely negated. The strategic advantages achieved by a resurgent Germany, from the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936 onwards, made nonsense of the French structure of alliances in Central and Eastern Europe and prompted the Munich Agreement in 1938. The débâcle of France in 1940 consummated a shift in Romanian policy towards Germany, with whom a formal alliance was concluded on 4 July 1940.

Bessarabia was a rather different problem. Hungary by itself was not a threat to Romania, but on the country's eastern frontier the Soviet Union was. The province had been taken over in 1918 at a time of total political confusion and although the major states of Europe had formally recognised the transfer of sovereignty, the Soviets had not. The frontier remained closed and the railway bridge over the Dneister River remained down. Various attempts were made to negotiate a settlement involving formal Soviet recognition of the new frontier but they all broke down on that specific issue. The most that could be achieved occurred in 1934, when the Soviet Union, like Romania, adhered to an international pact covering territory in *de facto* occupation. The reality was, however,

that the Soviet Union continued to be unreconciled and it ensured that its specific interest in Bessarabia was accepted by Germany when the alliance between them was concluded on 23 August 1939.¹

Ten months later, on 26 June 1940, and less than a week after the Franco-German armistice, the Soviet Union issued an ultimatum demanding the return of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina within four days under threat of invasion. Romania's new German ally withheld its support and the Romanian government capitulated. The Red Army moved in. King Carol of Romania asked Hitler to guarantee his country's frontiers but Hitler made this guarantee dependent on a solution of other territorial disputes with Bulgaria and Hungary. Stalemate in negotiations produced an imposed settlement, by which Bulgaria received back southern Dobrogea and Hungary northern Transylvania. The attempt to maintain the gains of 1919 intact completely collapsed. In two months, Romania had lost about one-third of its area. The German government then guaranteed the resulting frontiers.

The internal effect was to destroy the existing regime of King Carol and replace it with a military dictatorship under General Ion Antonescu. But the Bessarabian episode also provided popular support for Romania's participation in the German attack on Russia on 22 June 1941. Bessarabia was restored to Romanian control by the end of July. The troops then went on into the Ukraine and set up an area called Transnistria, which remained under Romanian administration until 1944.

After the tide of war turned against Germany, Romania was necessarily involved in the retreat and, by the same token, in Soviet political ambitions. These were unclear at the time. That there would be no other force to oppose the Soviets had been decided at Teheran in 1943, when British ideas about a possible liberation of Europe from the south were brushed aside by the Americans and the Russians; the Red Army was to enter Europe from the east and the western Allies were to invade from the west.

The problem, then, for the latter and the Romanians alike was to find out just what Soviet intentions were. In 1943, the

¹ D. Deletant, 'The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its Consequences for Bessarabia: Some Considerations on the Human Rights Implications', *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, vol. 30 (1991), nos 3-4, pp. 221-33.

Romanian Government began to sound out the Russians and the western Allies respectively on getting out of the war, on terms which would guarantee Romania's independence of Soviet authority. The more quickly the Red Army advanced, the more the scope for manoeuvre narrowed, as the Russians could get their ends by force rather than by negotiation.

On 23 August 1944, a coup carried out by King Michael removed Antonescu. Soviet troops arriving in Bucharest on 31 August found a Romanian government in place, ready to co-operate against the Germans. There was no political vacuum in which the Soviets could immediately install their own nominees. It took six months and direct interventions from Moscow for the Soviets to get in Bucharest a government to their liking. The technique by which this was achieved was the systematic creation of chaos, in which the prime movers were the Communists, who had arrived from Moscow in the baggage train of the Red Army, and indigenous Party members, who had previously been in jail or worked underground. With the war against Germany still in progress, the demands of the Red Army took priority and they provided the framework within which the Communists could operate to frustrate the political and economic reconstruction of Romania on any terms but their own. On 5 March 1945, a direct Soviet threat that only the setting up of a pro-Soviet government could guarantee 'the continuance of Romania as an independent state' brought about the decisive change. The key ministerial position, that of the Interior, was occupied by a Communist, Teohari Georgescu, and the holder of the powerful post of Secretary General to the Prime Minister Petru Groza (who kept up the non-Communist facade) was not only a Communist but also an officer of the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), Emil Bodnăraș. In that capacity, he also controlled the SSI, the intelligence service.²

The presence of the Red Army ensured that the Communists could not lose but they took initiatives through the political structure, the trade unions and the educational system which were

² This account of the Communisation of Romania deliberately focuses on Romanian-Soviet relations. For the wider context, see P.D. Quinlan, *Clash over Romania. British and American Policies towards Romania, 1938-1947*, Los Angeles: American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1977, and G. Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-1962*, Oxford University Press, 1964.

designed to reduce Romania to subservience to the Soviet Union. Internally, the aim was to break the existing structures of society and in this they succeeded. The final action was the enforced abdication of King Michael on 30 December 1947 under the threat of civil war. The same day, the Romanian People's Republic was declared. Its establishment did not stem from a popular will, freely expressed, but from the dictates of political groups who were the puppets of a foreign master. Even the legality of the law establishing the Republic was suspect, since the official record of the special session of the single chamber parliament, convened on the evening of 30 December, stated that it lasted only forty-five minutes. In this time the law was alleged to have been presented, a presidium nominated and both measures voted upon by the casting of white balls by 295 deputies. In addition, there are said to have been nineteen ovations which interrupted the presentation. Doubts have been cast as to first, whether so many deputies could have been assembled so rapidly in Bucharest while parliament was in recess on during the New Year, and secondly, the business could have been completed as rapidly as claimed.³

With the establishment of the Republic, the foundations of the totalitarian state could be put in place. The first step was to cement Romania into the Soviet bloc from a military point of view. This was achieved by a treaty of friendship, co-operation, and mutual assistance between Romania and the Soviet Union on 4 February 1948, based on the idea of a common defence against 'Germany or any other Power which might be associated with Germany either directly or in any other way'. The full significance of this article was explained by the Soviet Foreign Minister, who said that it was 'especially important now when the fomentors of a new war from the imperialist camp are endeavouring to knock together political and military blocs directed against the democratic states'.⁴ The regime had secured itself externally.

The second step to totalitarianism was the consolidation of the single mass party composed of an elite and dedicated membership. This was achieved by dissolving the major opposition parties, the National Peasant and National Liberal Parties in the

³ E. Focșeneanu, 'O Descoperire Istorică', *România liberă*, 15 October 1991.

⁴ G. Ionescu, p. 148.

summer of 1947 and by the forced merger of the Social Democrat Party (SDP) with the Communist Party on 12 November 1947 as the result of Communist infiltration. At the last SDP Congress on 5 October 1947, attended by Groza, Dej and Ana Pauker, a member of the Communist Party's Politburo, a resolution on merger with the Communist Party was passed by acclamation. According to figures presented at the Congress, the SDP at that time had some half a million members, only half of whom appear to have joined the newly-fused party which was known as the Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) and had a combined membership of 1,060,000.⁵

The RWP held its first Congress on 21–23 February 1948 and Dej was re-elected Secretary General, as were Pauker, Luca (another Politburo member) and Teohari Georgescu as the other three members of the secretariat. Emphasis was now given to the elite character of the Party and stricter membership requirements were introduced. No members of the 'former exploiting classes' were to be admitted, those applying for membership were to be carefully screened and a period of 'candidate' or trial membership was made compulsory. As a result of a Central Committee resolution of November 1948, a verification campaign was undertaken by what was called 'a non-party *aktiv*' of some 200,000 investigators, a euphemism which covered the participation of the security police, the army and officials of the Ministry of Justice.⁶

⁵ R.R. King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980, p. 71. The fate of Titel Petrescu, the SDP leader, was emblematic of that of opposition leaders. He was arrested on 6 May 1948, held in the security police headquarters in Bucharest, sent to Jilava prison and finally tried *in camera* in January 1952 for crimes against the state. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and served three years in Sighet gaol before being transferred to the Calea Rahovei headquarters of the *Securitate* in Bucharest in 1955, where he was told by the Minister of the Interior, Alexandru Drăghici, that a number of his colleagues in the former SDP would be released from prison if he signed a letter giving his support to the regime for publication in the Party daily *Scnteia*. He refused and was sent in August to Rîmnicu Sărat gaol where he learned from fellow prisoners of the death in prison of numerous Socialists. He agreed to sign a text on 13 September on the condition that all leading SDP members be released. He himself was freed but kept under virtual house arrest. The letter appeared in *Scnteia* on 18 December 1955 but only a small number of SDP colleagues were released. Petrescu complained to Petre Groza, the President of the Grand National Assembly, after which further releases were announced. Petrescu died in September 1957.

⁶ G. Ionescu, p. 204.

The period of investigation lasted from November 1948 until May 1950 and was directed at the various waves of members who had been recruited into the Party.

The first of these was comprised of non-politically affiliated workers and young Iron Guardists who in 1945 had been given responsible positions in factories and trade unions as a reward for joining. This group included domestic servants who had been canvassed by the Communists for membership as useful instruments for reporting on the activities of their employers. The second wave had come in during 1946 and 1947 and was drawn from army units, such as the Tudor Vladmirescu division which had been formed from Romanian prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. It also included Romanian administrative personnel working for the Soviet army. A third wave had been generated by the merger of the Social Democratic Party in 1947 and a fourth by those who had joined the new bureaucracy which staffed the institutions set up to effect the Communist revolution in all sectors of activity. The latter covered the personnel of the People's Councils, the peasants who had joined the collective and state farms and students and teachers in the reformed education system. Most of these recruits regarded Party membership either as the key to advancement and privilege or as insurance against being disadvantaged or even arrested; there was a good deal of opportunism in their motivation, especially among older people.⁷

The verification process removed from the Communist Party 192,000 'exploiting and hostile elements' and their elimination could only but augment the sense of terror which permeated most of Romanian society. This purge, aimed at creating an elite, coincided with the Party's programme of revolutionising agriculture, industrialising the economy and transforming society. The implementation of that programme required the institutionalisation of the new Communist system and, to this end, a Party organisation was created to supervise every aspect of endeavour. Central Committee sections were set up for women, youth, peasants, trade unions, transport, supply, industry and commerce and these were paralleled at local level. Prime importance was attached to ideological training which not only helped to reinforce the sense of belonging to an elite but also inculcated loyalty to the Party and cocooned

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

the member from insidious external influences. The feeling of elitism and exclusivity also served to increase coherence and unity within the Party, although both were threatened by internal dissension, until the threat was removed by Dej's purge of Georgescu, Luca and Pauker in 1952.

A third step in the imposition of the Soviet totalitarian model upon Romania was the adoption of the constitution of the People's Republic in April 1948 and the introduction of a Soviet-based judicial system. The constitution followed the pattern of the 1936 Soviet constitution.⁸ The parliament was called the Grand National Assembly, a single chamber which was described as 'the supreme organ of state authority'. A Presidium, composed of a president, a secretary and seventeen other members, acted on behalf of the Assembly when it was not in session, which was quite often, while the Council of Ministers was the supreme executive body. All these bodies were, of course, subject to the power of the Communist Party. Guarantees of civil liberties were generously provided but meaningless, as Article 32 illustrated: 'Citizens have the right of association and organisation if the aims pursued are not directed against the democratic order established by the Constitution.'⁹ That democratic order was defined by the Communist Party and buttressed by the security police.

The Party moved swiftly to transform Romania, following the Soviet model and employing Stalinist norms and practices. The nationalisation in June 1948 of industrial, banking, insurance, mining and transport enterprises not only allowed the introduction of centralized quantitative planning but also destroyed the economic basis of those stigmatised as class enemies. Confiscating private share holdings and threatening their owners was relatively straightforward; agriculture posed more complex problems. On 2 March 1949, the ownership of land was completely removed from private hands. This permitted the liquidation of the remnants of the old landowning class and of the *kulaks*, a Soviet term defining as 'rich peasants' those who hired labour or let out machinery, irrespective of the size of their holding. The land, livestock and equipment of landowners who possessed property up to the maximum of fifty hectares permitted under the 1945 Land Law was

⁸ R.R. King, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁹ G. Ionescu, p. 157.

expropriated without compensation. Virtually overnight, the militia moved in and evicted 17,000 families from their homes and moved them to resettlement areas. The confiscated land was either amassed to create state farms or was organised into collectives which were in theory collectively owned but were in fact state-run, since the Ministry of Agriculture directed what crops were to be grown and fixed the prices. Members of the collective were allowed to keep small plots of land not exceeding 0.15 of a hectare.

The majority of peasants, ranging from the landless to those who worked their holdings using only family labour, were organised into state or collective farms. This required extensive coercion. Resistance to collectivisation resulted in some 80,000 peasants being imprisoned for their opposition, 30,000 of them being tried in public.¹⁰ Collectivisation was completed in 1962 and its results put 60 per cent of the total area of 15 million hectares of agricultural land in collective farms, 30 per cent in state farms, and left 9 per cent in private hands. The latter was upland whose inaccessibility made it impractical to collectivise.

The destruction of the opposition parties was followed by the liquidation of their press, as the media came under total state control. Libraries and bookshops were purged of politically incorrect titles and the activities of journalists, writers, artists and musicians were brought under the Agitprop section of the Central Committee of the Party. Nothing could be published or performed without approval.

Education was similarly dealt with. In August 1948, the Law for Educational Reform closed down all foreign schools, including those run by religious orders. A purge was conducted of the teaching profession and of university students. Eminent professors were removed from the faculties of history and philosophy and their places taken by Stalinist indoctrinators, the most notorious of whom in the field of history was the Agitprop activist, Mihai Roller. The Ministry of Education banned the use of certain didactic materials and authorised textbooks incorporating Marxist-Leninist precepts. Marxism-Leninism, in Stalin's interpretation, was made obligatory in the curriculum from the secondary school upwards; the teaching of religion was totally banned.

The Church was the final major obstacle to the imposition

¹⁰ *Sântea*, 7 December 1961, quoted in G. Ionescu, p. 201.

of the Soviet model, but here the Romanian Communist Party did not follow to the letter the Soviet solution. Both the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Uniate or Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania had been vital in preserving a sense of national cohesion and identity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and both retained the allegiance of millions of Romanians. If both Churches could be manipulated to serve the regime's ends, then there was no point in destroying them. The Orthodox Church had been declared the dominant faith under the 1923 Constitution and had been given special privileges, such as the payment of its clergy's salaries by the state, and the Communist Party was to use this dependence to bring the Orthodox hierarchy under its control. The Uniate Church presented a different problem. It had been created at the beginning of the eighteenth century as a result of the conversion by Jesuits of many Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania to accept certain articles of the Catholic faith, among them the primacy of the Pope. As long as authority over the Church resided in Rome, it would be difficult for the new regime to bring it to heel. Thus the Romanian Communist Party, while officially condemning religious worship, nevertheless tolerated it within certain bounds prescribed by law. In this respect, it was more lenient than the Soviet regime. Tolerance of the recognised Churches required their subservience to the Party and their sonorous validation of the Party's policies, whether domestic or foreign.

The Law of Cults of 4 August 1948 vested in the Ministry of Cults control of the affairs of the legally recognised denominations. While asserting in Article 1 a guarantee of 'freedom of conscience and religion', it severely circumscribed that freedom by qualifying it with the open-ended provision that the religion practised was in harmony with the Constitution, internal security, public order and general morality (Articles 6 and 7). Legal recognition of a denomination could be revoked at any time where considered justified (Article 13). Similar restrictions were implicit in Article 32, which stated that 'ministers of religious cults who express anti-democratic attitudes may be deprived temporarily or permanently of their salary, which is provided by the state'. This provision was invoked regularly during the Ceaușescu period in an attempt to suppress the activities of Baptist pastors. All confessions were required to submit for approval to the Ministry of Cults

a statute regulating their activities in accordance with the laws of the state; in return, the Ministry would pay the stipends of clergy of recognised confessions.

The implementation of the law put the election of bishops under state control, packed the Holy Synod with Communist Party members and imposed on the Orthodox Church, the principal confession with some 10.5 million members, a new statute centralising its administration under the Patriarch, all of which allowed the regime to manipulate the Church more easily. At the same time, all estates and funds of the Church were nationalised, its teaching institutions taken over by the state or closed, clergy training severely restricted and religious practices, such as the public celebration of Christmas and Easter, banned. The Orthodox Church compromised with the regime, which ensured its survival at the expense of its moral authority.

Other Churches suffered more severely, largely because they resisted the imposition of state control. The close links of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic (Uniate) Churches with the West gave them more resilience but it is also the case that its bishops displayed remarkable dignity, courage and fidelity to their creed. There was, however, a major difference in the treatment of the two Churches at the hands of the regime: the Uniate Church was suppressed while the Roman Catholic was not, although it did not escape persecution. The explanation lies in the fact that most of the Roman Catholic faithful were Hungarians and the Romanian regime was guided in policy towards the Church by the need to avoid actions which might be interpreted by its fraternal neighbour as directed specifically against the Hungarian minority. Consequently, the Communist Party's policy towards the Roman Catholic Church was not to abolish it but to manipulate it by replacing control from the Vatican with control from Bucharest. This was only a partial success. Although the regime severed the Church's links with Rome, it was never able to impose its own authority on the Church. Throughout the Communist era the Roman Catholic Church was held in the ambiguous position of being tolerated but unrecognised. Agreement was never reached with the Ministry of Cults over the Church's legal standing and so the second largest surviving Church in Romania remained effectively illegal.

The Uniates' fidelity to their Church resulted in a brutal campaign

to destroy it. The last figures available before suppression indicated that there were one and a half million Uniates, with 1,725 churches. Created in 1699, its adherents practised the Greek rite but recognised the supremacy of the Pope. On these grounds it was as obnoxious to the Orthodox as to the Communists. The union with Rome was branded in official publications throughout the Communist period as 'anti-national and anti-historical', since it had split the unity of the Romanian people. These arguments were regularly revived during the Ceaușescu years, as his ultranationalist postures demanded the mobilisation behind him by his propaganda machine of an undivided, 'unitary nation, assembled behind its unique son'. It was no accident that Orthodox prelates played the dummy to the ventriloquist Ceaușescu, particularly the successive Metropolitan bishops of Transylvania, whose diocese had been awarded the confiscated Uniate churches and other property not nationalised in 1948 and whose congregations had been swelled by the hundreds of thousands of Uniates denied their own churches in which to worship.

With the assistance of the Orthodox Church, the regime manipulated a merger of the two churches, a merger in which the *securitate* was employed to extort the assent of the Uniate priesthood. Those who opposed the merger received the full force of its attentions. Uniate churches were handed over to the Orthodox while convents and monasteries were closed. The Church's legal existence was terminated on 1 December 1948; its dioceses and institutions were abolished and its buildings handed over to the Orthodox.

2

THE *SECURITATE* AND THE REMOVAL OF OPPOSITION, 1948-1965

In pre-Communist Romania, the secret police was engaged in activities similar to those pursued by the secret services of other states, namely the protection of the state against threats to its stability from both within and without, to which ends it gathered intelligence and infiltrated suspect groups. The creation of a secret police in Romania came in the wake of the peasant revolt of 1907. Since then, the police functions became more extensive and more differentiated with the growth of the Romanian state. The structure of bureaux changed but the duties remained constant: following the activities of foreigners on Romanian soil, controlling the frontier police, gathering intelligence in the interests of state security and monitoring the press. These were all ultimately vested in the Ministry of the Interior. Under its aegis, the definitive security organisation was set up between 1924 and 1929; this was the Directorate of Security Police (*Direcțiunea Poliției de Siguranță*) or *Siguranța* for short. It operated principally against the clandestine Communist Party and the ethnic minorities. For this purpose, it relied heavily on a vast network of informers.

In the 1920s, the Romanian Communist Party's (RCP) links with the Comintern and its advocacy of the return of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union won it few friends amongst the Romanian populace and made it an organisation easy to penetrate. Despite Communist propaganda efforts to demonstrate otherwise, the repressive measures taken against the RCP by the *Siguranța* were taken first of all against individual Party members and not against a social class; therefore they cannot be ranked alongside the regime of institutionalised terror installed by the Communists after the Second World War. Secondly, the severity of the treatment handed out to political detainees did not, generally speaking, descend

to the levels of inhumanity inflicted upon the victims of post-war Communist oppression.

In the 1930s, the indigenous Fascist organisation, the Iron Guard, represented a far more serious challenge to the authority of King Carol than the Communist Party. The Guard promised spiritual regeneration and the combatting of 'Jewish Communism'; it attracted support from those disillusioned with parliamentary government and its failure to solve the country's serious economic problems. A campaign of murders by the Guard and its leader Corneliu Codreanu's refusal to work with King Carol led the King to institute a personal dictatorship in February 1938 and to have Codreanu assassinated by the *Siguranța* in November of that same year.

In parallel with the *Siguranța*, the military had, of course, set up its own secret service, first under the General Staff and later under the Ministry of Defence. In addition to the usual panoply of activities, the King made it his personal secret police. Its counter-intelligence branch duplicated many of the activities of the *Siguranța*, such as monitoring the Iron Guard and the Communists. Under the Antonescu dictatorship, it became the Special Information Service (*Serviciul Special de Informații*) (SSI) in 1940. It rarely resorted to terror tactics against its adversaries and in one well-documented instance, protected three British Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents from the attentions of the Gestapo.¹ Its main preoccupation after January 1942 was the threat of sabotage by Communist agent infiltration. The *Siguranța* was busy at this time with maintaining surveillance of the Jewish minority, invariably described as the Soviet Union's fifth column. These two, the *Siguranța* and the SSI, conveniently lay to hand for the Soviets and the Communists. From September 1944, they were infiltrated respectively by the NKVD and by Bodnăraș' 'Patriotic Guards'. The institution of the pro-Soviet government of Petru Groza in March 1945 allowed both the SSI and the *Siguranța* to be brought under complete Soviet and Communist control. They were the prime instruments in extending that control to Romanian society as a whole.

Broadly, the role assigned to the *Siguranța* by the Soviet authorities after the coup of 23 August was the same as under King

¹ I. Porter, *Operation Autonomous: With SOE in Wartime Romania*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1989, p. 218.

Carol's dictatorship and that of Antonescu but with one major difference. Whereas the coercion from 1938 until 1944 was directed against one particular group in society, the Jews, the repression after the coup was extended to the whole of Romanian society. Even during the war, the landowner, the peasant, the banker, the lawyer and the priest carried on with their lives largely without the intrusion of the political police; now, in the building of the People's Democracy, the security police were called upon to eradicate existing political institutions and social structures. Police coercion and intrusion became part of everyday life and a feature of existence which generated a pervasive fear, a state of mind which revolutionised not just society's structures but also personal behaviour. Animated conversation gave way to the furtive whisper or parable, suggestion replaced open discussion and the simplest of messages was wrapped in a code.

On 27 April 1945, Groza signed an order giving the Secretary General Bodnăraş control of the SSI, allowing him to recruit from its own civilian personnel and from military personnel seconded from the Ministry of War. Hence another Soviet agent, Serghei Nikonov, was appointed to be the actual director of the SSI, now under the supervision of Bodnăraş.² The SSI's remit covered 'the gathering of general intelligence which met the higher interests of the state'. It was organised in four departments (directorates) and a secretariat. The first was changed with 'obtaining intelligence from abroad of a political, economic, social and military nature' and 'control of all diplomatic offices abroad', for which purpose it was subdivided into three departments: 'South', 'West'

² Nikonov's career is illustrative of the methods used by the NKGB to infiltrate their agents. Nikonov had been expelled from Iași University, where he was a student of chemistry, for participating in Communist meetings and was sent by the NKVD to Brussels to continue his studies. From there he was moved to Marseilles where he was co-opted into the local leadership of the French Communist Party. He was then brought back to Romania to run an espionage network but was caught, tried and imprisoned, first in Doftana gaol and then, after its destruction in the earthquake of November 1940, in Caransebeș where he joined Bodnăraş and Pintilie Bondarenko. On his release following the 23 August coup, he was reassigned duties by INU, the Foreign Intelligence Directorate of the NKGB, and these duties were institutionalised with his appointment as director of the SSI. In March 1954 Nikonov was transferred with the rank of Lieutenant General to head the Second Bureau of Military Intelligence of the Romanian General Staff. E. Mezincescu, 'Ecouri la Cazul Pătrășcanu', *Magazin Istoric*, no. 7 (July 19 2), p. 37.

and 'North'. Directorate One also included the Office for Issuing Entry-Exit Visas and Passports to Romanian Citizens, which was to be used 'as an auxiliary means of recruiting part-time informers'.³ Here is found for the first time a policy statement of a government agency in Romania making the issue of a passport conditional on collaboration with an organ of state security. It was a tactic that remained an integral part of the Communist regime's armoury of coercion until the overthrow of Ceașescu.

Other departments of the SSI were responsible for obtaining intelligence from within the country and for mounting counter-espionage operations, both civilian and military. Eavesdropping and shadowing of targets was carried out in collaboration with a parallel directorate in the *Siguranța*. Military intelligence remained the task of the Army General Staff but this was also subordinated to a Soviet master, the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence agency. The subservience of the Romanian security and intelligence services to the interests of the Soviet Union was completed by making the security police, still known by its pre-war title of *Direcțiunea Poliției de Siguranță*, responsible to Pantelimon Bondarenko, a Ukrainian-born Soviet agent also known as Pantiuska who had been imprisoned for spying in Romania in the late 1930s. Bondarenko assumed a Romanian name, Gheorghe Pintilie, as did Serghei Nikonov of the SSI (Serghei Nicolau) and a number of Soviet-trained agents who later joined Bondarenko at the apex of the *Siguranța*, among them Boris Grunberg (Alexandru Nicolski).⁴

³ *Organizarea și funcționarea Organelor Ministerului de Interne de la înființare până în prezent*, Bucharest: Ministry of the Interior, 1978, p. 87.

⁴ Gheorghe Pintilie's promotion to membership of the Central Committee of the RWP Central Committee in June 1948 and the status of his wife Ana Toma as an INU agent demonstrated the stranglehold which the Soviet security service had upon the Romanian leadership. Ana Toma's role was typical of that assigned by the NKGB/INU to its female agents, who were often described in Romanian Party circles as 'Amazons'. After being infiltrated into the Party before the war, she seems to have acted as much as a custodian of her partners as a wife. Her first marriage to a veteran Communist, Sorin Toma, disintegrated following the latter's exile to the Soviet Union, and in 1942 she became the partner of Constantin Pîrvulescu, another senior figure in the embryonic Party. Four years later she married Pintilie, who was a notorious drinker and over whom the NKGB/INU deemed it prudent to have total supervision in view of the position he was given. Soviet control was further illustrated by the composition in 1948 of Dej's immediate entourage. His private secretary was Nina Nikonova, wife of Serghei Nikonov, the head of the SSI, his *chef de cabinet* was Mikhail Gavrilovici, an NKGB agent, and the head of

Among the Soviet intelligence chiefs from whom instructions were channelled to Bodnăraş and Pintilie was Dmitri Georgievich Fedichkin, the chief Soviet adviser in Romania from 1944 to 1947 and principal representative of the External Intelligence Division of the NKGB.⁵

After the imposition of the Groza government, the scope of the *Siguranţa*, which remained subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior, was enlarged by a new 'Special Mobile Brigade' to carry out arrests and organise the transport of prisoners whose numbers had grown rapidly in the purge of 'Fascists' from public life which Petru Groza, the Prime Minister, announced on 7 March 1945.

A new wave of terror was now initiated. Marin Jianu, Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior, and Alexandru Nicolski, its chief inquisitor, were ordered to arrange a number of stage-managed trials on charges of sabotage and espionage. The first in the series opened on 24 May 1948, when a group of six industrialists, led by Anton Dumitru and Radu Xenopol, were accused of sabotaging their own mines in order to create an energy crisis in the country. Three months later, Pintilie was made head of the organisation which was renamed *Direcţia Generală a Securităţii Poporului* (DGSP) or *Securitate* for short.

The *Securitate* was divided administratively into ten departments, called 'directorates', covering the country as a whole. Its individual regions were further subdivided into county offices and town and communes bureaux.⁶ The SSI worked in parallel with the directorates responsible for counter-sabotage and penal investigation.

The new name signalled a new mission for the security police.

his personal guard was Valerian Bucikov, another Soviet NKGB officer.

⁵ C. Andrew and O. Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev*, London: Sceptre, 1991, p. 362.

⁶ The ten directorates were: Information, Counter-sabotage, Counter-espionage in the Prisons and Police, Counter-espionage in the Armed Forces, Penal Investigation, Protection of Ministers, Technical Cadres, Political (responsible for Party purity), and Administration. Auxiliary departments dealt with the interception of mail, surveillance and eavesdropping and further included a cipher section and a secretariat. Regional directorates were established to cover the capital Bucharest and the districts of Braşov, Cluj, Constanţa, Craiova, Galaţi, Iaşi, Oradea Mare, Piteşti, Ploieşti, Sibiu, Suceava and Timişoara.

Its role, defined under its founding decree Number 221, 30 August 1948, was 'to defend the democratic conquests and to ensure the security of the Romanian People's Republic against the plotting of internal and external enemies'.⁷ Defence of the 'democratic conquests' meant the maintenance of the Communists in power and thus the new Romanian People's Republic officially certified itself a police state. The top leadership of the *Securitate* were all officers of the Soviet security police.⁸ Nevertheless, their activities were supervised by counsellors from the Soviet Ministry of State Security.⁹

Brutality was the characteristic feature of the men chosen by the NKGB/MGB to head Romania's security police. The conduct of both Pintilie and Nicolski speaks for itself. The former, as head of the Political and Administrative Section of the Central Committee, whose attributes included Party security, carried out the death sentence imposed on the former RCP General Secretary Ștefan Foriș in 1945. Pintilie collected Foriș from the secret residence in which he had been held since his arrest in April 1944 by car and in a lonely Bucharest street crushed his skull with an iron bar. He then gave instructions for Foriș's mother

⁷ *Organizarea și funcționarea*, p. 106.

⁸ Two weeks earlier, on 15 August, Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Pintilie was appointed by decree the DGSP's Director. Two assistant directors, with the rank of Major General, were appointed on 1 September; they were Alexandru Nicolski, a Russian-speaking Bessarabian Jew, and Vladimir Mazuru, a Ukrainian from Bessarabia (later Romanian ambassador to Poland). All three were officers of the Soviet NKGB (the People's Commissariat of State Security) which in 1946 had been raised in status from a Commissariat to a Ministry, becoming the MGB, the Soviet Ministry of State Security (at the same time the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) became the MVD, the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs).

⁹ A body of Soviet counsellors from the MGB supervised the activity of the young DGSP. The MGB chief adviser in Bucharest from 1949 to 1953 was Aleksandr Sakharovsky, who, in 1956, became head of the First Chief Directorate of the KGB. The Soviet ambassador to Bucharest, Serghei Kavtaradze, appointed in 1948, came under the authority of the newly formed KI (foreign intelligence service), headed by Vyacheslav Molotov and his deputy Fedotov, and was given control of the civilian (ex-MGB) and military (ex-GRU) residents in Bucharest. In 1949, Molotov was succeeded as Foreign Minister and Chairman of the KI by Vyshinsky, who was a sycophant of Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, head of the NKVD between 1939 and 1946, and after 1946 Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

to be murdered. She was drowned with millstones hung around her neck in the Criş River in Transylvania.¹⁰

Despite the veil of secrecy which was cast over the personnel of the DGSP, Nicolski's reputation for brutality earned him the dubious distinction of becoming the first senior officer to achieve notoriety outside Romania.¹¹ In a statement made in Paris in January 1949, Adriana Georgescu Cosmovici, a twenty-eight-year-old woman arrested in Bucharest in July 1945 on the grounds of having belonged to a resistance movement, recounted how the 'Communist secret police investigators' beat her repeatedly with a sand-filled leather hose, struck her head against a wall and hit her face and chin until she was left with only six teeth in her lower jaw. She named three investigators as having threatened her with guns: Stroescu, Bulz and Nicolski.¹²

¹⁰ V. Tismăneanu, 'The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1989), p. 350, note 47.

¹¹ Alexandru Nicolski's original name was Boris Grünberg. He was born on 2 June 1915 in Chişinău, the principal town of Bessarabia which at that time was under Russian rule. In 1932 he joined the Union of Communist Youth in his native town and in the following year, was detained for two weeks by the *Siguranţa*. Between 1937 and 1939 he did his military service in a signals regiment in Iaşi and after being demobbed, he obtained a job in the telephone exchange in Chişinău. In December 1940, six months after the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia, he was recruited by the NKVD and moved to Cernăuţi, where he underwent training as an agent of the foreign intelligence directorate (INU) of the NKVD. Supplied with false Romanian identity papers in the name of Vasile Ştefănescu, he was sent across the frontier on 26 May 1941 to gather information on Romanian troop movements. Within two hours he was arrested by Romanian frontier guards. According to the record of his interrogation, his rudimentary knowledge of Romanian betrayed his foreign identity and he passed himself off as an ethnic Russian with the name of Alexandru Sergheevici Nicolski. He was tried for espionage in July 1941 and sentenced to forced labour for life. He was jailed in Ploieşti and then moved to Aiud to join other imprisoned Soviet spies, among them Vladimir Gribici, Simion Zeigner and Afanasie Şişman, all of whom stayed after their release in August 1944 in Romania. In October 1944 Nicolski joined the police (*Direcţia Generală a Poliţiei*) and after the imposition of the Groza government in March 1945 was named head of the Crops of Detectives. On 17 April 1947, he was appointed Inspector General of the *siguranţa* (*Poliţia de Siguranţă*) and when the DGSP was established in the following year, he was made one of Pintilie's deputies. In 1953, he was given the post of Secretary General of the Ministry of the Interior. *Cuvîntul* (The Word) nos 112-115 (March-April 1992). I am grateful to Claudiu Secaşiu for locating these articles, and to their author Marius Oprea.

¹² *Suppression of Human Rights in Romania*, Washington DC: Rumanian National Committee, 1949, p. 65. Documents published after Nicolski's death on 16 April

Establishing the strength of the *Securitate* is difficult because much of the material relating to its organisation was removed by the Soviet authorities when their counsellors were withdrawn in the early 1960s (the last Soviet counsellor left the Ministry of the Interior in 1964). Consultation of rudimentary figures surviving in the Ministry of Interior archives relating to the strength of the *Securitate* indicated that the number of officers serving in the ten national directorates shortly after its constitution was 1,148, of whom 848 were listed as secretarial and manual staff (the latter all carried military rank, such as sergeant-major, even if they were typists, chauffeurs, plumbers or waitresses). The thirteen regional directorates employed 2,822 officers, roughly two-thirds of whom were manual or ancillary staff. These figures may appear abnormally low, given the popular conception of the DGSP as a ubiquitous and all-pervasive instrument of coercion. But they do not include the network of informers who enabled the *Securitate* to function as efficiently as it did.

Soviet advisors were attached to each of the national directorates to supervise the training of the Romanian recruits and to monitor their activity; communication was carried out through interpreters, many of whom were from Bessarabia. Emphasis was placed on trustworthy cadres. In the eyes of the Soviet advisors, many educated Romanians were considered unreliable and compromised because of the Antonescu's regime's alliance with Germany. Additionally, very few Romanians had willingly shown any enthusiasm for the Romanian Communist Party before its propulsion to power, whereas conversely, some members of the ethnic minorities had. Hence, one should not be surprised to find several recruits for the senior positions in the *Securitate* drawn from two categories of person: ethnic minorities and unskilled manual workers.

Contrary to claims made by contemporary ultranationalists, the numbers drawn from ethnic minorities, although disproportionate, do not appear to be excessive. 'Appear' is stressed here because it is clear from the *Securitate's* own listings of the ethnic identity of its senior officers that it wished to obscure the Russian provenance of its three principal commanders, Pintilie, Nicolski and Mazuru, by entering them as Romanians. However, there is no evidence

1992 suggested that in July 1949, he ordered the murder of seven prisoners, allegedly leaders of an anti-Communist resistance movement, in transit from Gherla jail. *Cuvântul*, no. 119 (May 1992), p. 6.

to suggest the 'Romanianisation' of officers of other ethnic origins. An examination of the ethnic and professional background of senior officers in the DGSP (i.e. with the rank of major and above) shows that of a total of sixty, there were thirty-eight Romanians, fourteen Jews, three Hungarians, three Russians (Pintilie, Nicolski and Mazuru), one Czech and one Armenian. These figures contravert the claim made in the anti-semitic weekly, *Romania Mare*, of 25 October 1991 by its editor Corneliu Vadim Tudor, a notorious sycophant of Ceauşescu. This stated that the *Securitate* was staffed largely by Hungarians and Russian-speaking Jews. Both the latter minorities were well represented in the DGSP but not abnormally so. Of the total number of 3,973 employees listed in 1950, 247 were Hungarians and 338 were Jews. Most of the former were employed in those regional directorates which covered the major concentrations of Hungarian population. This same observation is also valid for the Jews: of the 1,151 personnel in the central directorates based in Bucharest, 148 were Jews (see Annex 2 for further staff details).

As far as professional background is concerned, the information available is limited to the national directorates and the secretariat: among twenty-five persons appointed to senior officer rank, there were two electricians, two carpenters, a locksmith, a blacksmith, a lathe operator, a craftsman, a tailor, a chemist, a schoolteacher, a doctor, an accountant, a lawyer, one persona with only an elementary education, five with degree studies and five whose background was not given. Compared to the population of some 17 million, the number of DGSP officers seems very small and the evidence provided by consultation of DGSP files shows that they relied heavily for information upon the 42,187 informers who were used in 1948. In the local bureaux, where there were often no more than a handful of staff, the officers were overworked. Their principal brief was to identify and monitor the activities of former members of outlawed opposition parties and organisations, such as the Iron Guard, and to provide monthly reports to the directorates responsible for information and counter-sabotage in Bucharest. These reports represent an invaluable survey of political allegiances and their relation to social background in Romania of the early 1950s.

Two other principal organs of internal security in the People's Republic were established early in 1949. On 23 January the militia

(*Direcția Generală a Miliției*) was set up to replace the police and gendarmerie (rural police) and on 7 February, the security troops (*trupele de securitate*) were created. Both bodies were placed under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior. Among the militia's duties was that of issuing residence permits, one which facilitated its task of regulating the movement of population, of monitoring suspects and of preparing for deportations. The militia was estimated to have a strength in 1953 of 40,000 while the number of security troops was put at 55,000 officers and men, organised in brigades and equipped with artillery and tanks.¹³ The principal duties of the security troops were to maintain public order in the major industrial centres and to quell any resistance to government measures, such as collectivisation or appropriation of goods and property. Throughout the 1950s, they were called upon to eradicate partisan resistance in mountain areas and were employed to guard the labour camps.

A legal framework for the actions of the *Securitate*, the militia and the security troops was provided by a new system of justice, the principal feature of which was its subservience to the Party and state. Under Article 65 of the Constitution of the People's Republic, enacted in 1952, the role of the judiciary was 'to defend the regime of popular democracy and the conquests of the working people, to assure the respect of popular legality, of public property, and of the rights of citizens'. Judges were already being assisted by 'people's assessors', who were Party nominees. The court, represented by the judges and assessors, had the power to intervene in all trials and present its evidence as well as to appoint defence attorneys whose role was largely limited to apologising for the defendant's alleged offences. No private legal practice was allowed.

The Party body charged with initiating arrests and criminal proceedings was an institution specific to Communist regimes known in Romanian as the *procuratura*. It was vested with 'supreme supervisory power to ensure the observance of the law by the Ministries and other central organs, by the local organs of State power and administration, as well as by officials and other citizens'.¹⁴ The *procuratura*'s powers included the direction of military, state

¹³ 'The Armed Forces' in *Captive Rumania: A Decade of Soviet Rule*, London: Atlantic Press, 1956, p. 363.

¹⁴ G. Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania*..., p. 217.

security and criminal prosecutions, the supervision of court activities and of militia criminal investigations, the supervision of court activities and of militia criminal investigations, the fixing of penal sentences and inspection of prisons. Like the *Securitate*, the *procuratura* relied heavily upon informers whose activities were encouraged and rewarded in the spirit of the procedures laid down by the notorious Soviet prosecutor general of the 1930s show trials, Andrei Vishinsky, who boasted that 'thousands of informers ensure that the *procuratura* can react swiftly'.¹⁵

'Anti-state activities' were so loosely defined that incorporation within them was a constant noose dangling over the heads of all citizens. The term covered acts 'considered as dangerous to society', even if these were 'not specifically provided for in the law as crimes'. The death penalty for treason and economic sabotage was introduced on 12 January 1949 and the next year for crimes against national independence and sovereignty, for negligence by workers 'leading to public disaster', for theft and destruction of military equipment and for plotting against the state, spying and economic sabotage.¹⁶

Nothing illustrated more graphically the coercive nature of the centralising policies pursued by the Communist regime than its use of forced labour. Just as Lavrenti Pavlovich Beria, the security supremo in the Soviet Union at that time, was by Stalin's death in 1953 the second largest employer of labour in the Soviet Union, so too the Ministry of the Interior in Romania was effectively charged with managing part of the economy. Forced labour was introduced under the labour code of 8 June 1950. A Directorate for Labour Units was set up in the Ministry of the Interior whose task was 'to re-educate through labour elements hostile to the Romanian People's Republic'. Cosmetically obscured by the euphemism 'temporary labour service', which the Council of Ministers was given the right to demand from citizens, forced labour was used as an instrument of punishment for the thousands charged with economic sabotage and absenteeism. Included among their number were the tens of thousands of peasants who resisted the forced collectivisation of agriculture. The 'labour units' were renamed 'work colonies' by a decision of the Council of Ministers

¹⁵ V. Veniamin, 'The Judiciary' in *Captive Rumania*..., p. 313.

¹⁶ G. Ionescu, pp. 172-3.

of 22 August 1952 and their administration, like that of the prisons, was placed in the hands of the Ministry of the Interior.

The numbers of inmates was swelled by the victims of mass deportations, usually carried out by the militia, from the major cities which had begun in 1952 to make room for the workers drafted in to provide manpower for new urban-based factories created in the drive to industrialise. Several categories of person were removed from Bucharest. The families of war criminals, persons in prison and those who had fled abroad were to receive notice twelve to twenty-four hours before being deported and were allowed to take with them 50 kilos of luggage. Officers purged from the army, former judges, lawyers, industrialists and those who owned more than 10 hectares of land were also to be removed but were allowed to take all of their property with them.¹⁷

By the end of 1952, no city resident was allowed to change his dwelling without permission from an 'Office of Rental Accommodation' and all movement between towns was controlled by the militia. Travel was permitted only in the line of work or for health reasons. Any person staying in a place other than home for more than twenty-four hours was required to register with the militia, including hotel guests and people staying with relatives, and foreigners required a permit for all trips made inside the country. The restrictions on travel for both Romanians and foreigners were lifted in the early 1960s but the other controls remained in place until the overthrow of Ceaușescu.

Only estimates can be given for the numbers of persons deported to the labour camps which were set up under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior in 1949.¹⁸ In the early 1950s, there were believed to be 180,000 in camps scattered around the country, 40,000 of whom were exploited on the notorious Danube-Black Sea canal project, which had eight camps and an additional 20,000 so-called voluntary workers. This project was undertaken on the initiative of Comecon and approved by the Politburo on 25 May 1949. Its purpose has been given two interpretations: some saw it as part of a wider scheme to create an 'Eastern Ruhr', through

¹⁷ R.L. Woolf, *The Balkans in our Time*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956, p. 461.

¹⁸ *Organizarea și funcționarea*, p. 112.

which Soviet iron ore was to be shipped through a double canal Black Sea-Danube and Danube-Oder-Rhine; others gave it a military significance, enabling Stalin to send many small Soviet vessels up the Danube in the event of a deterioration of relations with Yugoslavia. Confirmation of this latter scenario was seen in the Soviet decision to give financial backing to the project which would have been denied to other Romanian economic plans.¹⁹ Whatever its aim, the project required the largest assembly of members of the forced labour camps in the country, detainees of the regime concentrated from every walk of life. Members of the professional classes rubbed shoulders with dispossessed farmers, Orthodox and Uniate priests with Zionist leaders, Yugoslavs from the Banat with Saxons from Transylvania – all victims of the denial of human rights which accompanied the Romanian regime's programme of political and economic revolution.

Corneliu Coposu, the secretary of National Peasant Party leader Maniu and himself an inmate of Romanian prisons for seventeen years, put the numbers of those arrested after 1947 as 282,000. Of these, he estimated 190,000 to have died in detention.²⁰ The exact figure will probably never be known, as was demonstrated by the chance discovery in the summer of 1992 of the remains of hundreds of victims of what appeared to be *Securitate* executions. Several of the skulls unearthed in the grounds of a nineteenth century manor house in the village of Căciulați, some 20 km. north of Bucharest, were said to bear the marks of bullet holes.²¹ The failure of the Romanian authorities either to conduct a proper autopsy of the 316 skeletons removed from the common grave or to set up an inquiry into their provenance offered yet one more demonstration of official reluctance to probe into the past, especially where the *Securitate* was involved. In this case, its local headquarters was established in the house concerned in 1948 and had been moved to another building within the grounds in 1951. Whether the skeletons are of persons murdered on the spot or, as local belief has it, of families who resisted collectivisation in the 1950s and whose bodies were brought for burial in this remote

¹⁹ G. Ionescu, p. 194.

²⁰ C. Coposu, *Dialoguri cu Vartan Arachelian*, Bucharest: Editura Anastasia, 1992, p. 95.

²¹ *România liberă*, 24/25 October 1992, p. 1.

spot, is impossible to establish without some form of investigation, but what is clear is that none of the local *Securitate* officers of the period had been questioned. Isidor Ishtok, the commandant, died in 1992 but at the time of writing his junior officers, Ion Foti and Aurel Madăr, were hale and hearty. Foti, aged seventy-four, was running a private business in the nearby town of Snagov, while Madăr had retired to the Transylvanian city of Arad.

The numbers of those denied their liberty at the time would represent about one person in every forty of the adult population of Romania. In Coposu's view the explanation for these numbers lies in the excess of zeal with which the Romanian coercive apparatus sought to outperform its patron. Many of those detained were peasants who resisted the land reform of 2 March 1949, under which all agricultural property over 50 hectares was appropriated by the state. To overcome this opposition, security troops were brought in and in several regions, the peasants, sometimes aided by 'partisan groups', were engaged in violent skirmishes with the troops who tried to organise them into working brigades. In some areas, the peasants burnt the newly-created co-operative farms. This happened in the county of Arad where *Securitate* documents published in 1993 revealed that after a state farm had been destroyed on 31 July 1949, frontier troops restored order after arresting ninety-eight persons and shooting twelve peasants on the spot. Reports from the *Securitate* office in Timișoara gave details of 'this rebellion' and mentioned that two other peasants were shot dead 'while trying to escape while under arrest'.²² In a report made to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in December 1961, Dej admitted the arrest of 80,000 peasants had been carried out in order to force through collectivisation, allegedly on orders from Ana Pauker and Teohari Georgescu, and that 30,000 of them had been tried in public.²³

The highest concentration of labour camps was in the Bărăgan Steppe, half-way between Bucharest and the Black Sea. This inhospitable and thinly populated region saw its number of inhabitants increase in the early 1950s through the mass deportations of Serbs and Germans living in the western area of the Banat. They were considered a security risk as tension between Yugoslavia and

²² *România liberă*, 2 October 1993, p. 16.

²³ G. Ionescu, p. 201.

Romania grew following the former's expulsion from the Cominform in June 1948.

The deportations from the Banat region began in the summer of 1951. On 14 November 1950, the *Securitate* finalised the deportation plan under the title 'Evacuation plan of the frontier zone with Yugoslavia over a belt of 25 km. of elements who present a danger through their presence in the area'. The operation was expected 'not to exceed three months'.²⁴ The *Securitate* targeted 40,320 persons for deportation from the area. They were classified as follows: 1,330 foreign citizens, 8,477 Bessarabians, 3,557 Macedonians, 2,344 persons who had collaborated with the German army during the war, 257 Germans, 1,054 'Titoists', 1,218 people with relatives who had fled abroad, 367 persons who had helped the 'anti-Communist resistance', 731 'enemies of the socialist order', 19,034 kulaks and innkeepers, 162 former landowners and industrialists and 341 convicted criminals. Included in the plan were 590 persons who lived outside the frontier zones. Under the plan, they were all to be moved to the region of Ialomița in the Bărăgan and Galați.

The deportations themselves began on 16 June 1951 and were carried out by over 10,000 officers and men under the strict supervision of Maj. Gen. Mihail Burcă, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, and Maj. Gen. Eremia Popescu, the commander of the MI troops. Transporting the deportees required 2,656 railways cars and 6,211 lorries. Documents from the DGSP show that rumour of the impending deportations had led many people to attempt to cross the frontier secretly into Yugoslavia, while others placed their children with friends and relatives outside the designated zone.

The first trains left between 16 and 20 June 1951. The deportees were only allowed to take what belongings they could carry, the rest of their property being bought by specially constituted commissions who paid them only a fraction of the value of the possessions. A shortage of trains meant that many of the deportees had to wait in the burning heat for two or three days in the fields where they had been headed. The special trains were guarded by troops and avoided stops in the main railway stations to prevent any communication with ordinary citizens. On arrival, the fortunate

²⁴ *România liberă*, 2 July 1993, p. 11.

deportees were allocated makeshift clay-walled huts with straw roofs in special settlements, some of which had been given Soviet names. Others, even on the *Securitate*'s admission, were literally 'dumped in the middle of nowhere in the full glare of the sun without the necessary means of shelter'.²⁵ The same reports talk of a lack of drinking water and irregular supplies of bread and many cases of children suffering from overexposure to the sun. Despite these problems, the deportees used the industry and enterprise typical of the population of the Banat to create the new settlements which subsequently became a feature of the area.

A number of prisons were earmarked for certain categories of prisoner. Sighet, in the northern province of Maramureș, built in 1898, was chosen as the centre for incarceration of what the regime considered to be its most dangerous opponents, due to its proximity to the Soviet Union. Its first political prisoners entered its gates on 22 August 1948. Between that date and 1956, its seventy-two cells held four former prime ministers, notably Iuliu Maniu, as well as the head of the National Liberal Party, Constantin Brătianu, and the bishops of the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches. About 180 members of Romania's pre-war ruling elite were held in the prison, more than two-thirds of them being over the age of sixty, and several, as in Maniu's case, over seventy. Many of them had never been tried for any crime but merely arrested on orders issued by the Ministry of the Interior and taken straight to Sighet. Such was the fate of Dumitru Caracostea, a member of the Romanian Academy, who was for a brief spell Minister of Education in the Gigurtu government of August 1940. This author's mother-in-law, Caracostea's own daughter-in-law, told him that prisoners were usually placed two in a cell and required to carry out menial duties, such as cooking, cleaning the corridors, collecting water from a handpump in the courtyard and carrying it to the higher levels. They were punished for the slightest deviation from prison rules, such as speaking during exercise. Transgressors, and Caracostea was among them, were flogged and made to act as a 'horse' while jailers vaulted over them. The prison was finally closed in 1974.²⁶ Former members of the Iron Guard were concentrated in Aiud prison,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ 'Memoria și istoria', *România liberă*, 22–23 May 1993.

while many schoolteachers and lawyers ended up in Gherla. National Peasant Party members were sent to Galați and former policemen were held in Făgăraș gaol.

One prison, in the town of Pitești situated some 120 km. northwest of Bucharest, became notorious for an experiment of a grotesque originality which began there on 6 December 1949. Termed 're-education', the experiment employed techniques of psychiatric abuse designed not only to inculcate terror into opponents of the regime but also to destroy the personality of the individual. The nature and enormity of this experiment, conducted by prison officers under the direction of Alexandru Nicolski of the DGSP, set Romania apart from the other East European regimes yet details of it are still largely unknown in the West. The 're-education' experiment lasted until August 1952 and was conducted in other prisons as well, including Gherla, albeit on a smaller scale. Even so, the process became synonymous with Pitești. However, the Pitești experiment should be distinguished from the other programmes bearing the label 're-education'. Striving to impose conformity through coercive methods such as forced labour or abuse of drugs was also euphemistically termed 're-education' by the Ministry of the Interior throughout the period of Communist rule and therefore the word, with a different currency, continued to be used long after the Pitești experiment.

Of all the crimes committed by the authorities in Romania's prisons under the Communist regime, the 're-education' programme was more carefully shrouded in secrecy than any other. The principal reason for this was that the very victims of 're-education' were forced to become, in their turn, the executioners and naturally the executioner is reluctant to admit his crime. Nevertheless, underground whispers about the Pitești experiment circulated in Romania's prisons throughout the 1950s. Some of this fragmented oral history was presented in 1963 in a book compiled by Dumitru Bacu, himself a political prisoner, which was published in Romanian in the United States and later translated into English.²⁷ Virgil Ierunca's study *Pitești*²⁸ draws heavily on Bacu's presentation but enabled Romanians to learn of the enormity of Pitești, since extracts from it were broadcast on Radio Free

²⁷ D. Bacu, *The Anti-Humans*, Monticello, IL: TLC, 1977.

²⁸ Virgil Ierunca, *Pitești*, Paris: Limite, 1981.

Europe shortly after publication. After Ceașescu's overthrow, more evidence of the re-education drive emerged in the form of memoir literature: the effects of the extension of the re-education programme to Gherla prison in Transylvania in autumn 1951 are described by Aristide Ionescu, a former prisoner there, in his recently published memoir.²⁹

None of these accounts identifies the initiative for the re-education programme, although its nature suggests Soviet inspiration, probably Beria but possibly even Stalin himself. The programme was based on the theories of the Soviet sociologist and educationalist, Anton Makarenko (1888–1939), regarding common law criminals. The offender is made conscious of being a *déclassé* whose only salvation lies in winning the support of the Party. The only way in which he or she can do this is by leading other offenders down the road of honesty and this is achieved through 're-education'. In Makarenko's view, 're-education' was conducted through collective labour, but in its Romanian adaptation, 're-education' was effected through the application of continual physical torture combined with 'brainwashing'.

Physical torture was commonly applied by the *Securitate* during interrogation in both their centres and in prisons, but in the process of 're-education' the prisoner, after interrogation, was placed in a cell with his torturer, who was a fellow prisoner, and the torture continued. Charged with the implementation of this programme was Alexandru Nicolski, the Assistant Director of the *Securitate* with special responsibility for interrogation of prisoners, who used as his principal instrument Eugen Țurcanu. Țurcanu was himself a prisoner in Pitești and was instructed by Nicolski in the autumn of 1949 to form a team of torturers from amongst his fellow prisoners. The majority of these were students from the university centres of Bucharest, Iași and Cluj, a thousand of whom had been rounded up in 1948 on charges of belonging to the Iron Guard, National Peasant Party or the Zionist movement.

Among the Iron Guardists recruited by Țurcanu were a certain Alexandru Popa (Țanu), Nuți Pătrășcanu (no relative of Lucrețiu), Livinski and Mărtinus. Their presence in the group provided the

²⁹ A. Ionescu, *Dacă vine ora H pe cine putem conta*, Pitești (privately printed), 1992, pp. 46–55.

authorities with their scapegoats at the state-managed trial in 1954 of those involved in the 're-education' programme: the whole group of 're-educators' were acting on the orders of Horia Sima, the Iron Guard leader in exile, who sought to discredit the Communist regime by telling his followers in prison to carry out these tortures. The lack of vigilance on the part of the prison authorities in Pitești allowed these acts to take place undetected until the Party unmasked this 'Fascist' group. The official version was repeated by Ion Lăncrănjan in his novel *Caloianul* (The Rain Talisman)³⁰ but ignores, as Virgil Ierunca has shown, the presence in the group of others who were not Iron Guardists: Titus Leonida, a member of the National Peasant Party, two Jews, Fuchs and Steiner, arrested for alleged Zionist activity, Bogdănescu, who went on to the Danube-Black Sea canal, Dan Diaca and Cori Gherman, a Socialist who had returned to Romania after the war.³¹ None of these was included in the trial of the Pitești torturers for fear of compromising the 'official version'.

Nicolski's aim in applying the 're-education' programme at Pitești was twofold: to destroy existing political opposition and to prevent the emergence of a future one among the post-war generation. The method of torture and brainwashing chosen had the advantage of not only permitting the arrest of other opponents of the regime still at liberty, who would be denounced under interrogation, but also making the prisoners, who themselves became torturers, accomplices in the crime. The moment the tortured one becomes the torturer, his status as a victim disappears. According to Ierunca, there was not one prisoner in Pitești (except those who died under torture) who did not act as instructed; otherwise they could not survive. Only those who, for one reason or another, were removed for interrogation to Bucharest, escaped with their hands clean. As Ierunca argues, it is for that reason that only the Soviet initiators, the *Securitate* organisers, in the person of Nicolski, and the twenty or so prisoners led by Țurcanu who were the actual torturers, without themselves having been tortured beforehand, can be held responsible for these crimes.³²

Alongside Nicolski, who was notorious for his brutality towards

³⁰ I. Lăncrănjan, *Caloianul*, Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1977.

³¹ Ierunca, *Pitești*, pp. 11-17.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

prisoners brought before him for interrogation,³³ there stand accused of involvement in the experiment a number of officers from the Prison Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior (*Direcția Generală a Penitenciarelor*). These included Col. Sepeanu, who tried to introduce the 're-education' programme to the prison in Țirgu-Ocna in Moldavia, Col. Zeller, who recruited 're-educated' students for work on the Danube-Black Sea canal and was said to have shot himself in 1952 following the purge of Ana Pauker, Capt. Dumitrescu, director of Pitești prison, and Capt. Mihai Goiciu, director of Gherla prison. The latter is said to have been helped to apply the programme by the prison doctor, Raoul Sîn.

Amongst the torturers, Eugen Țurcanu carried the greatest blame. In 1940, he enrolled in the Iron Guard youth movement but broke his links with it after it was outlawed. After 23 August 1944, he joined the Communist Party, enrolled at the Faculty of Law in Bucharest and in 1948 was made a member of the Iași County Party bureau. He was alleged to have denounced two students at the law faculty but this ascent in the Party was rapidly brought to a halt when he was denounced as a member of the Iron Guard by a friend of a former Iron Guard colleague who had been caught in a mass arrest of students on 15 May 1948. The colleague, called Alexandru Bogdanovici, was arrested together with Țurcanu and both were held in Suceava prison. Bogdanovici was sentenced to twenty-five years' forced labour for membership of the Iron Guard and Țurcanu to seven. In the hope of alleviating his lot, Bogdanovici accepted a proposal from the authorities to read out Marxist literature to his fellow prisoners and Țurcanu joined in. Both were then moved, together with other prisoners from Suceava, to Jilava gaol near Bucharest. According to Ierunca, Țurcanu was taken off to see Nicolski to discuss methods of 're-education', perhaps because of his activity in the Communist Party. Upon his return he formed a group entitled *Organizația Deținuților cu Convingeri Comuniste* (Organisation of Prisoners with Communist Convictions) (ODCC) and they were then all sent to Pitești. None of them, however, knew what awaited them until 6 December 1949.

Dumitru Bacu explained why Pitești was chosen for the ex-

³³ See the testimony of Adriana Georgescu Cosmovici, *Suppression of Human Rights in Romania*, p. 65.

periment. The prison there was a maximum security one, built in the 1900s. Outside the town, far from any dwelling, the place was well suited for torture because no one could hear the screams from within its walls. In this ideal centre for experiments, all the students arrested up until 1948, roughly 1,000 were assembled. The description that follows of the 're-education' programme is taken from Bacu's account.

The students were divided into four groups. The first comprised those imprisoned without trial, which did not prevent them from serving six to seven years; the second were those convicted of minor offences, such as aiding political opponents of the regime, with sentences of three to five years. The third group were those accused of 'plotting against the social order', with sentences of eight to fifteen years. Most of the inmates belonged to this category. The last group contained those sentenced from ten to twenty-five years' hard labour; these were leaders of student associations.

It was from this latter group, considered the most resilient, that in the middle of November 1949, fifteen students, led by Sandu Angelescu, were moved into hospital ward 4 of the prison where they found Turcanu's group, also made up of fifteen prisoners. Befriending each other, they confessed their intimate thoughts until 6 December of that year, when one of the wardens ordered Angelescu to give him his sweater. Angelescu was left in the unheated ward in mid-winter in just his shirt and cursed the warden as he left. This prompted his best friend in the cell, Turcanu, to strike him without warning in the face and to chide Angelescu for cursing the warden. At this signal the other members of the Turcanu group pounced on their 'friends' and a general brawl ensued. It was broken up by the entrance of warders, the prison director Capt. Dumitrescu and the political officer Lieut. Marina. Angelescu explained what had happened and Dumitrescu, pretending to be furious with Turcanu, demanded a reply. The latter then revealed that he was head of the ODCC, and that their attempts to persuade Angelescu's group to join them had resulted in their being attacked.

Things had obviously been pre-arranged. Angelescu was accused of resisting 're-education' and was ordered, together with his friends, to strip naked and to lie down on the bare concrete floor. Then they were beaten for half an hour by the wardens armed with iron bars and clubs and left with Turcanu and his colleagues.

For several days afterwards, the beatings were repeated, this time by Țurcanu and his cronies. In between the beatings, Țurcanu applied the programme of 're-education'.

This programme progressed in four stages. The first was known as 'external unmasking', by which the prisoner had to show his loyalty to the ODCC by revealing everything he had hidden from the *Securitate* interrogators. The results were written down by Țurcanu, signed by the prisoner and forwarded to the Ministry of the Interior. In the second phase, called 'internal unmasking', the tortured student had to reveal the names of those who had behaved more kindly or leniently towards him in prison, be it fellow inmates or members of the staff. The third and fourth stages had another purpose: the destruction of the prisoner's personality and moral fibre. Thus the third stage, known as 'public moral unmasking', required the student to denounce everything he held most dear: his family, his faith, his friends and finally himself. Only when his moral collapse seemed to Țurcanu to be complete, and when he was thus worthy of admittance into the ODCC, was the student subjected to the final stage, the one which guaranteed no return: the re-educated figure was forced to conduct the process of the re-education of his best friend, torturing him with his own hands and thus becoming one of Țurcanu's disciples.

The confessions were regularly interrupted by physical violence, described by Bacu. Over a period of weeks, the student was subjected to an exhausting programme of labour. Sometimes he was made to clean the floor of a cell with a rag clenched between his teeth and, to goad him on, one of the re-educated students would ride on his back. At night the students slept on pallets. Other students, who had already been through the experiment, sat at the foot of each pallet and at the moment when a student fell off into a deep sleep, the one at the end of the pallet was required to strike him hard on the soles of his bare feet with a rubber hose. Each night thus became a torment during which the student tried *not* to fall asleep. Weary and in constant fear of pain, the student soon reached a state of helplessness and desperation.³⁴

In this first stage of brainwashing, the treatment required the

³⁴ A. Rațiu and W. Virtue, *Stolen Church: Martyrdom in Communist Romania*, Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1978, p. 101.

victims to experience intense pain sensations when eating and drinking. Students were made to kneel on the floor with their hands behind their backs and lap up scalding-hot foot from bowls as fast as they could. Their excrement was sometimes placed in these same bowls and they were forced to eat it. Eating thus became a source of humiliation as well as of pain and the sense of taste, smell and touch were repeatedly associated with pain. Țurcanu was particularly sadistic towards theology students. Some were 'baptised' in the mornings by having their heads plunged into a bucket of urine while others chanted the baptism rites. One student had been tortured in this way so often that he 'baptised' himself automatically in this way every morning. On Easter morning 1950, a student was made to play the role of priest. He was dressed in an excrement-covered sheet and given a roll of insect-repellent paper in the shape of a phallus which his colleagues had to kiss. Many doubtless contemplated escape by suicide but there were no means of committing it. Cutlery was only given to the re-educated and the students were watched permanently. However, one student did succeed: Șerban Gheorghe threw himself down into the stair-well from the fifth floor of the prison. Țurcanu's special victim was Bogdanovici, the former friend whom he held responsible for his own arrest. In March 1950, he subjected him to three days of uninterrupted torture by jumping on his stomach and chest until his internal organs were crushed. Bogdanovici went into a coma and died on Maundy Thursday.³⁵ During his interrogation at Pitești on 4 April 1953, Țurcanu said that he had killed Bogdanovici because he had been a member of the SSI during the war against the Soviet Union.³⁶ At least fourteen others died in Pitești during the re-education process.

Eventually, 'tortured, starved, sleepless, terrified, trapped, alone, at the edge of death but not allowed to die, the student at last reached a point at which he would plead to give incriminating evidence against himself'.³⁷ It was at this point, after six weeks of torment, that the 'unmasking' began. It took the form of a

³⁵ Ierunca, p. 46.

³⁶ C. Aioanei and C. Troncotă, 'Arhipelagul Ororii (II)', *Magazin Istoric*, vol. 27, no. 4 (April 1993), p. 11, note 1.

³⁷ Rațiu and Virtue, p. 101.

written confession of the student's 'crimes'. He was made to dwell on every misdeed he had ever done prior to his arrest, even things he intended to do. Țurcanu and his assistants sought to destroy systematically everything that anchored the personality of the prisoner so that they could control him at will. Each student who was an active Christian had to deny his faith by blaspheming the Eucharist, singing hymns into which obscene words had been inserted. Each family member's past was distorted and invested with aberrant features. A father, for example, had to appear as a crook. As many of the students were from country areas and were sons of priests, they were forced to describe erotic deeds ascribed to their fathers, while their mothers were made out to be prostitutes.

Next, the student was made to deny his own identity (his 'mask') by writing a false autobiography for which he concocted a history of sexual deviance. This was meant to inculcate in him a sense of moral decadence and to destroy his value system. Through torture, lies were turned into truth and truth into lies. The student, as Bacu writes, 'would see the world as a god with two faces; the first, which he had thought was real, had now become unreal; the second, fantastic and ugly beyond any previous imaginings, had now become real... The lie was accepted as a biological necessity for survival.'³⁸

Stripped of his old persona, the student was now dependent on Țurcanu's lies and a slave to his commands. Crazed with fear and reduced to an infantile state of reliance, the student became Țurcanu's puppet, ready to be jerked into action. As a final act of self-destruction, he was ordered to prove his loyalty to his new master by inflicting on the next group of students the same treatment that he himself had undergone. If he was regarded as too lenient in the beatings he gave or underzealous in depriving his victims of sleep, he was seen as a failure and subjected to the 'unmasking' process a second time. When the students were forced to inflict torture on others or simply to witness it, their imagination exaggerated the pain felt; this had a stronger psychological effect than if they themselves were being struck. One student described this phenomenon to Bacu:

Watching others being tortured, I had the impression that I

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

had been bound and placed on a powder keg and that a madman constantly circled the keg with a lighted candle. I expected the flame to touch the powder at any moment and that the keg with me on it would be blown up. That could have happened at any time; in other words, if a re-educator suddenly took the notion that I had been given too light a punishment for my suspected guilt, he could have transferred me from 'spectator' to 'sufferer' on the spot – the equivalent of setting off the powder with the candle flame.³⁹

Gaining the confidence of those to be subjected to the process was a pre-requisite for the brainwashing. Those freshly re-educated befriended or renewed old friendships with their intended victims. Then, at a given signal, they would pull out concealed cudgels and ferociously beat them. One can imagine the mental collapse this produced in the victim. As the programme was applied in Pitești throughout 1950 and 1951, teams of re-educated students were unleashed and sent to other prisons, notably to Gherla and the Danube-Black Sea canal labour camp at the peninsula colony. At the latter, the students were responsible for seeing that each day's work norm was done; they pushed many prisoners so hard that they died of exhaustion. Re-education was carried out in huts 13 and 14, the group in the former being led by a Cluj medical student named Bogdănescu, and that in hut 14 by Enăchescu, a student of medicine at Bucharest. The most notorious torturers in these two groups were Laitin, the Grama brothers, Cojocaru, Climescu, Stoicescu, Lupașcu and Morărescu.

It was Bogdănescu's murder of an eminent doctor, Professor Simionescu, during his re-education in hut 13 that precipitated the termination of the programme at the canal. Simionescu's beatings at the hands of Bogdănescu led him to throw himself on the barbed-wire perimeter fence, where he was shot by the camp guards. News of the doctor's death reached his wife, who protested to the Ministry of the Interior and foreign radio stations broadcasting in Romanian, such as the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and the BBC. Their reports prompted a Ministry of the Interior inquiry at the peninsular camp. This response provides a vivid illustration of the iniquity of the Communist regime's machinery of repression. On realising that details of the programme could

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

no longer be kept secret, the very body which, in the person of Nicolski, implemented it set up an inquiry to absolve itself of responsibility. As a result of the inquiry, some ten 're-educators' were transferred from the canal camp and its director Georgescu was replaced by a certain Lazăr. Conditions in the camp improved; better food was served to the prisoners and standards of hygiene raised. Such were the circumstances in which the programme was stopped at the canal.⁴⁰

The selection of students sent to the canal camps had been made at Pitești by Col. Zeller, an officer in the Prison Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior. In the winter of 1951, he also despatched a group of thirty to forty re-educators, led by Țurcanu and including the Livinski brothers and Ion Popescu, to Gherla to test the programme on older victims. Another group was sent to the Ocnele Mari prison near Rîmnicu Vîlcea while a third one went to the prison sanatorium for tuberculosis sufferers at Țîrgu Ocna in Moldavia. There the programme was supervised by Nuți Pătrășcanu.

It was at these last two institutions that the programme ran into difficulties. In the sanatorium the patients, being ill, could not be subjected to its full force. One patient, a student called Virgil Ionescu, tried to commit suicide and others went on hunger strike. One Sunday, while a football match was being played on ground adjacent to the sanatorium, the patients screamed for help and word reached the town. The local *Securitate* bureau chief, Capt. Bălan, ordered an inquiry. Not one of the re-educators was punished but the programme was halted.⁴¹ At Ocnele Mari, the prison regime was less severe than at Pitești since it also held common-law criminals and it was easier for prisoners to communicate amongst each other. Some prisoners were ex-ministers and university professors who threatened mass suicide when attempts were made to apply the programme. Fears that word would get out about the programme led to its suspension there.

Threats of disclosure did not always work. Bacu relates a visit to Gherla made, it seems, by Nicolski during the re-education drive in the prison and mentions the complaints made by a prisoner to the assistant director of the *Securitate*. The prison commandant,

⁴⁰ Ierunca, pp. 70-1.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Gheorghiu, denied any knowledge of the programme. Subsequently, the prisoner was tortured by Turcanu, who pulled out his toe-nails with a pair of pliers. Former prisoners at Gherla testified to Bacu about the direct involvement of the prison commandant, his political officer, Avădanei, and the prison doctor Bărbosu in the re-education process. Aristide Ionescu, a Gherla inmate and one of the few unsuccessful targets of re-education, recalls the names of some of Turcanu's assistants: they were Livinski, Mărtinuș and Popa Tanu.⁴² These, it will be remembered, had not been through the programme themselves. Other torturers at Gherla were Paul Caravia, later an archivist at the architecture faculty of the University of Bucharest, Ion Popescu, Cornel Pop, Danil Dumitreasa, Morărescu, and Măgirescu. Another Gherla torturer named by Bacu was Ludovic Rek, a Transylvanian Hungarian who clubbed to death Ion Fluieraș, a leading member of the SDP, with a sack of sand in 1953. One torturer whom Bacu particularly feared at Gherla was Gheorghe Calciu, a former student of medicine who was alleged to be one of the prison commandant's most efficient informers.⁴³

Calciu's case is a special one, for it illustrates how indomitable the human spirit can be; despite suffering the utmost degradation and perversion, it can reassert itself and acquire true dignity. At the same time, Calciu's experience provided him with an inner strength which gave him the courage to defy Ceaușescu later. In 1954, Calciu was tried for his part in the re-education programme, found guilty and sent to Jilava. Here his fellow prisoners reported that he behaved like a saint. On his release, he enrolled at the Orthodox theological seminary in Bucharest, was ordained as a priest and became a professor at the seminary. In 1978, he was expelled from his post after preaching sermons critical of the decision to demolish the Ene church in the centre of Bucharest. He was arrested on 10 March 1979, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for 'propagating Fascist ideology', sent to Aiud prison but released on 20 August 1984, following widespread international pressure.

Gherla, it appears, was the last bastion of the re-education programme. It was here that the veteran re-educators were active

⁴² A. Ionescu, p. 46.

⁴³ Ierunca, p. 52.

until the summer of 1952, when they were told to pack their belongings. Țurcanu, Popa Țanu, and others were moved to Bucharest and the prisoners at Gherla could breathe a little more easily. There is no published record of what happened next to Țurcanu and his colleagues; word-of-mouth testimony indicates that they were ordered to write a report on the programme, its methods and its effectiveness for the *Securitate*. On its completion, they were asked to make a declaration stating that the programme had been carried out without authority from the Party and even without that of the prison authorities. They then realised that a trap had been laid for them and refused. It was now their turn to be tortured.

Why was the re-education experiment brought to an end in 1952? As yet, a clear answer cannot be given and one can only speculate. It is possible that its termination was linked to the purge of Pauker, Luca and Georgescu and was part of Dej's strategy to demonstrate the validity of his claims to have ended a regime of terror initiated by the troika. The fact that Col. Zeller, an officer in the prison directorate of the Ministry of the Interior directly involved in the programme and a friend of Pauker, shot himself shortly after her dismissal supports this explanation. But just as Pauker's friendship with Stalin and Molotov spared her a trial, so Nicolski's connection with the NKGB ensured his immunity from prosecution. The preparations for a trial lasted two years and only Calciu and Măgirescu resisted and refused to make the required declarations; they were, in fact, tried separately. In order to absolve the regime of any blame in the re-education programme, the re-educators were to be portrayed as agents of Horia Sima, the former Iron Guard leader. This scenario required that all the torturers who had no Iron Guard connections be tried separately (i.e. Titus Leonida, Fuchs, Steiner, Bogdănescu, Dan Diaca and Țori Gherman). Thus only the former Guardists Țurcanu, Popa Țanu, Nuți Pătrășcanu, and Mărtinuș stood trial together.

At the secret trial of Țurcanu and his associates held in October 1954, it was alleged that, from his exile in Spain, Horia Sima had given Țurcanu orders in 1949 to carry out a programme of torture in Pitești in order to compromise the Communist regime.⁴⁴ The prosecution indictment, dated 20 September 1954,

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

stated that twenty-two prisoners, led by Țurcanu, were being sent for trial 'for the murder of over thirty prisoners, and the abuse and torture of over 780 prisoners, of whom 100 had been left with severe injuries. Some of them had committed suicide to avoid torture, while others had gone mad owing to the psychological and physical pressures to which they had been subjected.' Nothing was said about the involvement of the Soviets, of Nicolski or indeed of the ODCC, but the collusion of certain prison staff in the actions of Țurcanu's group was recognised. In the words of the indictment, 'At Suceava prison, the Iron Guardist Eugen Țurcanu worked with the governor, Tiron, and Second Lieutenant Marici in the re-education of the prisoners, and later he arranged with the latter his transfer to Bucharest jail to organise the so-called re-education there. Both the Inspector General of prisons Farcaș and his political adviser Stanga were aware of this transfer.'⁴⁵ In the case of Pitești prison, the indictment accused the governor Alexandru Dumitrescu, the political adviser Marina, the Inspector General Iosif Nemeș, and Lieutenants Mihai Mircea and Nicolae of helping Țurcanu.

Yet these officials in the Ministry of the Interior were small fry and the need to find a scapegoat at a senior level probably dictated the revelation which arose in the evidence presented under interrogation by some of the accused of the part played by Marin Jianu, a Deputy Minister of the Interior in the programme. He was alleged by Gheorghe Popescu to have told prison officials at Pitești to 'use beatings for intimidation...and then he chose five of us and told us that we would receive extra food if we administered the beatings as well'.⁴⁶

No distinction was made at the trial, presided over by Colonel Alexandru Petrescu, between the two categories of accused: those who had not been subjected to the programme (Țurcanu, Popa, Nuți Pătrășcanu and Livinski) and those who had become torturers because they had (Gheorghe Popescu, Cornel Pop, Dan Dumitrescu, and Octavian Voinea). On 10 November 1954, the Bucharest Military Tribunal found the accused guilty and sentenced them all to death. The twenty-two were Eugen Țurcanu, Alexandru Popa (Țanu), Nuți Pătrășcanu, Mihai Livinski, Gheorghe Popescu,

⁴⁵ Aioanei and Troncotă, p. 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Cornel Pop, Dan Dumitrescu, Octavian Voinea, Vasile Pușcașu, Vasile Păvăloaie, Ion Stoian, Grigore Romanescu, Aristotel Popescu, Maximilian Sobolevshi, Constantin Juberian, Cornel Popovici, Ion Voiu, Ion Cerbu, Cristian Paul Șerbănescu, Constantin Ionescu, Octavian Zrbanca and Nicolae Colibaș. Țurcanu was executed, exactly when has not been revealed. Not all the death sentences were carried out. Those who were to be tried on other charges connected with the programme, such as Țanu and Voinea, were held in custody, and they benefited from an amnesty in 1955 which commuted all death sentences to those of forced labour for life.

The end of the re-education experiment did not mean the end of the suffering for its victims. The marks of the brainwashing and torture scarred many lives. One young man, formerly a student of literature, told Dumitru Bacu of his experience at Pitești and Bacu noted the aftermath:

When the young man finished his narrative – this was several years after the ‘unmaskings’ – an indescribable despair could be read on his face. Then he concluded: ‘By an unimaginable fatality we become the gravediggers of our own aspirations, of our own souls. For never again will we be able to raise our heads. Christians once died happily for their faith. But we, also Christians, could not attain that happiness. We became the tools of the Communism that we heartily detested...It was as if Satan had grabbed us from the hands of God...I may seem to be whole, but in reality I am only the wreck of myself, discredited in the eyes of my friends, and despised by my enemies. And yet, in essence, we were guilty of nothing, really.’⁴⁷

Electric-shock treatment is described in some accounts of prisoners in Pitești but there is no mention of the medically unjustified administration of neuroleptic drugs and insulin shock treatment as part of the re-education programme by Bacu and Ionescu. Nevertheless, it is clear from prison memoir literature that in a number of high-security prisons such as Aiud drugs were used as a method of punishment. The frequency of their use and the period of years over which this practice continued are difficult to determine, given the paucity of evidence available.

⁴⁷ Rațiu and W. Virtue, pp. 93–4.

Similarly, the scale upon which the political abuse of psychiatric methods occurred after the closure of the Pitești experiment is not known but it is quite probable that the regime's sensitivity to world opinion about its human rights' record in the light of its attempts to gain admittance to the United Nations led to its diminution. When that happened, in 1955, the condition allowed greater freedom in the country. In response, Dej closed several prisons, among them Sighet, and about 8,000 political prisoners were moved to Jilava. But in the light of Romania's catalogue of repression and abuse of basic human rights since the imposition of Communist rule, its admission to the UN was, and remained, a travesty of respect for the principles of the UN charter.

The methods used to eliminate opposition throughout the country and to ensure its subservience to the regime came to be used by leaders in their struggle for power in and over the Party. In this, the *Securitate* played an important role, especially after April 1950 when it absorbed the SSI. The brutal behaviour of Pintilie and his immediate colleagues instilled a culture of violence within the ranks of the security police which generated fear not only among their opponents but also within the ranks of Party activists who had sought to justify police terror and whose leading figures, namely Teohari Georgescu, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, became its victims. The model in this, as in virtually every other aspect of life, was the Soviet Union.

Subservience to Moscow at state security level after 1944 was matched by subservience at Party level. The consolidation of power by Dej depended on his avoidance of giving his Soviet masters any reason to question his loyalty. Throughout the years 1944 to 1952, he acted out scenarios provided by Stalin, but in the latter year Dej was offered the opportunity to assign roles. This was amply demonstrated when the order came from Stalin to purge alleged Zionists. Apart from its political impact, the purge had the further significance of continuing the patten of internecine struggles which characterised the history of the RCP; in doing so, it renewed a culture of violence and fear that permeated Romanian society from top to bottom in the post-war period.

At the time of its emergence in the politics of post-war Romania, the Communist Party leadership fell into three groups, categorized by whether they had stayed in the country or in Moscow during

the Second World War and, if the former, then whether they were in gaol or were operating in successful clandestinity. The first group, conventionally called 'the native faction', was led by Dej and was composed largely of workers and activists jailed during the strikes of the 1930s. This group spent the war years in the Tîrgu-Jiu internment camp and included Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Chișinevski (Roitman), Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Teohari Georgescu and Alexandru Moghioroș.

The second faction comprised some members of the pre-war Communist leadership who had taken refuge in Moscow to escape arrest; hence their name the 'Moscow bureau'. This group was led by Ana Pauker, a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and head of the External Bureau of the RCP. Pauker forged close links with Molotov and Vishinski in the Soviet Union; her associates included Vasile Luca (Laszlo Luka), Leonte Răutu (Lev Oigenstein) and Valter Roman (Ernst Neulander).

The third group was made up of veteran Communists who had remained in Romania during the war and acted clandestinely. Its leading members were Ștefan Foriș, a Hungarian who was confirmed as Secretary General of the RCP by the Comintern in 1940, Remus Koffler, Constantin Pîrvulescu, Iosif Ranghet, Constantin Agiu and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. To a large extent these three factional divisions mapped out the targets for the purges.

It is not yet clear to what extent Dej's rise from factional in-fighting to the leadership of the Party was the result of his own initiative or prompted by instructions from Moscow, although reputedly Stalin favoured Dej because he, Stalin, wanted one satellite leader who was not Jewish. What the record clearly shows is that dancing to Stalin's tune eventually allowed Dej the chance to consolidate his faction's hold on the Party by removing the principal members of the 'Moscow bureau', Pauker and Luca, from the leadership. Even so, Dej would not have been able to do this without his consummate ability to create options for action as insurance against Stalin's next move.

Pauker's downfall was accomplished through the 'verification' of Party membership and aimed at eliminating 'careerist and opportunist' elements. The investigation lasted from November 1948 until May 1950. It resulted in a purge which removed

from the Party 192,000 'exploiting and hostile elements' granted membership in 1945 by Pauker when she was in charge of the mass recruitment programme.⁴⁸ At the same time, an anti-Semitic campaign produced purges in the Jewish Democratic Committee; an investigation into the Jewish Union affected Pauker's relatives and a similar enquiry involving the Hungarian Democratic Committee, a Communist Party organisation for the Hungarians in Transylvania, compromised Luca.

Whether Pauker and Luca attempted to fight back by outflanking Dej is unclear. By 1950, Zionism had replaced Titoism as the heresy of the day and by this token, Pauker was suspect. She was further undermined by elections to Party organisations held on 13 March 1951. In the spirit of 'Romanianisation' of the Party, which was the corollary of the anti-Semitic drive being launched in all the satellite parties on Stalin's orders, Dej managed to have elected his own placemen. In May 1951, at the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the Party, Dej recognised Pauker and Luca as the oldest serving members of the Party leadership but they acknowledged Dej as the sole leader. From that moment Dej was supreme.

The arrest of Rudolf Slansky, the Secretary General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, on 24 November 1951 as part of a Zionist 'conspiracy' sent one signal to Pauker that, despite her close relations with Stalin and Molotov, she was not immune, and another to Dej, that she was not untouchable. That said, the degree to which pressure from Stalin or an internal power struggle within the Romanian Party leadership was responsible for the attacks on Luca, Pauker and Georgescu at a Central Committee plenum held on 29 February and 1 March 1952 which resulted in their eventual purge still resides in the realm of speculation.

Nevertheless, some of the interpretations which have been offered of the purge can be dispelled. First, it was not simply a manifestation of a struggle between a 'native' Dej faction and the Pauker 'Moscow' faction. Teohari Georgescu, who was an ethnic Romanian and had spent the war years with Dej, was included among the 'right-wing deviators'. Secondly, the attack on Pauker should not be seen as evidence of anti-Semitism. When

⁴⁸ G. Ionescu, p. 209.

the order came from Stalin to purge alleged Zionists throughout the Soviet bloc, Pauker's Jewishness was a fortunate accident for Dej; he used the opportunity to dismiss not just Pauker but also the gentile Luca, who was a Transylvanian Hungarian. Moreover, two of Dej's associates in his move to take advantage of Stalin's paranoid delusions about a Zionist 'conspiracy' were themselves Jews, namely Iosif Chișinevski (Roitman), who became a leading figure in the Party secretariat, and Leonte Răutu, the head of the Party propaganda body. That this group, supplemented by Petre Borilă (Ivan Fedorov) and Miron Constantinescu, was able to remove the very faction of the Party based in wartime Moscow shows how hazardous it was to place one's fate in the hands of the Soviet dictator.

Finally, the purge should not be interpreted as the embryo of Dej's autonomous policies of the early 1960s. Dej had shown himself to be no less Stalinist than Pauker and Luca. At the Cominform conference in Bucharest in July 1949, it was Dej who carried out Stalin's brief of denouncing Tito; in the following year, he ordered the deportation of the Serb minorities living on Romania's border with Yugoslavia to an area east of the capital.⁴⁹ While the signal for the purge came from Stalin, the identity of the victims suggested itself and Dej went ahead with advice from his Soviet advisors. The charges against the 'deviators', as Pauker, Luca and Georgescu were dubbed, were prepared by Constantinescu, Chișinevski and Alexandru Moghioroș under strict supervision from Soviet counsellors, the principal one of whom was Aleksandr Mihailovici Sakharovsky, the MGB adviser to the Ministry of the Interior.

The Central Committee plenum held on 29 February and 1 March 1952 criticised Luca for allowing 'grave' mistakes and 'frauds' to be committed by the Finance Ministry and the National Bank when applying the currency reform of January 1952. By taking a 'conciliatory line' and shielding Luca, Pauker and Georgescu were implicated in these errors.⁵⁰ On 26–27 May, Luca was dismissed from the Party. Pauker was strongly criticised at the same meeting but she was allowed to retain her post as Foreign

⁴⁹ G.H. Hodoș, *Show Trials: Stalinist Purges in Eastern Europe, 1948–1954*, New York: Praeger, 1987, p. 101.

⁵⁰ G. Ionescu, p. 210.

Minister. Georgescu was removed from his post as Minister of the Interior. His replacement, Alexandru Drăghici, had been Pintilie's deputy and successor in the Central Committee section devoted to the counter-espionage monitoring of Party members.

Dej's pre-eminence in the Romanian Party was sealed by his appointment on 2 June 1952 as President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), a post which he combined with that of Secretary General of the Party. Thereupon he intensified the attack on Luca, Pauker and Georgescu. In a speech delivered on 29 June, he blamed Luca for 'retarding the development of heavy industry', for protecting thousands of *kulaks* by disguising them as peasants and for encouraging capitalism and profiteering. Pauker was condemned for obstructing the organization of co-operative farms and Georgescu for allowing the abuses committed by Luca and Pauker to take place. Pauker and Georgescu were spared arrest but the political assassination of the former proceeded rapidly. A rumour campaign was launched by the *Securitate* that she had contacts with Western intelligence agencies through her brother who lived in Israel, and that she had money deposited in a personal bank account in Switzerland. She was dismissed from her post as Foreign Minister. Her association with Stalin and Molotov may well explain her gradual elimination from public life in contrast to Luca's abrupt arrest. The manner of her exit from politics, as well as the fact that she was succeeded as Foreign Minister by Simion Bughici, also a Jew, shows that her demise had little to do with the anti-Semitic drive which was at its height at the time in the rest of Eastern Europe. She lived a secluded life in Bucharest until her death in 1960.

Luca was less fortunate. He was tortured, perhaps in order to extract a confession implicating him with Pătrășcanu, but Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 and the trial and execution of Beria in December removed the pressure on Dej for a major show trial and ushered in a power struggle in the Kremlin. The struggle confused the Party leaderships in the satellite states but did not affect the master-servant relationship. In internal and external policies, Romania, like the other East European satellite states, continued to imitate the Soviet Union. Dej showed himself to be both cunning and cautious in handling the repercussions of the Soviet political succession. By continuing with the trials of 'spies' and 'terrorists', he could arm himself against possible criticism

of relaxing 'vigilance' against 'imperialist' enemies and earned himself some time to see which way the wind was blowing in Moscow. It became clear that separation of power was to be the order of the day when Nikita Khrushchev became First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in September 1953 and Georgi Malenkov was made Prime Minister. Yet this very separation of power in the Soviet Union gave Dej more room to manoeuvre and he resisted Soviet pressure to separate his own powers as Secretary General and Prime Minister by introducing collective leadership until April 1954. Before doing so, he took perhaps the most cynical decision of a career littered with shameful deeds of repression. In order to eliminate a possible rival to his personal power whom he anticipated might receive the support of the 'reformist' Soviet leadership, he ordered the trial of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, who had been held in custody since 1948, to be staged at last.

Vulnerable to the mistrust and envy of Soviet leaders and his Party comrades alike, Pătrășcanu undermined his own public position by rash displays of patriotism, which, when construed as 'chauvinism', amounted to one of the severest crimes in the then Communist rubric. The catalyst for his downfall was, however, Stalin's refusal to tolerate the plans to establish a Balkan (though Communist) federation launched by Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian Communist leader, in January 1948. Romania's apparent willingness to join won a severe reprimand from the Kremlin, in which the Romanian Party was instructed to purge itself of 'chauvinistic elements'.

Pătrășcanu was arrested in August 1948. The interrogation of himself, his wife and selected associates by the *Securitate* followed only five months later, in January 1949. It lasted until October of that year, when the task was handed over to the SSI. This procedure allowed the investigation to be keyed into the purges of 'Titoist' heretics in other satellite states, culminating in the execution of László Rajk in Hungary and Traiko Kostov in Bulgaria in September and December 1949 respectively. Pătrășcanu was kept in confinement and continuously interrogated, by the *Securitate* once again after 1952, with the ubiquitous Soviet counsellors directing the course and methods used. He did not appear as a main defendant in a show trial, as Rajk and Kostov. His trial was held *in camera* in April 1954. The list of his and his co-defendants'

alleged crimes ran to 36 pages; principally, they charged that Pătrășcanu had been 'an agent of the Fascist-bourgeois police and the British Secret Service' and had supported Antonescu in the war against the Soviet Union, had worked with the Anglo-American imperialists to overthrow the regime established on 6 March 1945 and that he had passed secret information about state security to Anglo-American intelligence agencies. A military court heard these charges and handed down the death sentence which Dej, with Soviet approval, had stipulated. Dej had rid himself of the last remaining alternative to his leadership and had pre-empted any Soviet attempt to impose a post-Stalinist restructuring of the Party.

After Dej's death, the Pătrășcanu case became a *cause célèbre* in Romanian Communism. The investigations involving the surviving participants still leave many crucial aspects unclear. They were, however, used by Ceaușescu to discredit his rival for supreme power, Alexandru Drăghici.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and the rearrangement of the Soviet leadership had little resonance in Romania. Organisational changes to give an appearance of following the Soviet pattern meant little, except that they gave Dej an opportunity to promote his own followers, Alexandru Drăghici and Nicolae Ceaușescu, both of whom became candidate members of the Politburo in April 1954. Dej could also argue that the Stalinists, in the persons of Pauker and Luca, had already been purged. Luca was tried, as last; his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Dej himself remained a convinced Stalinist, limiting his strictures on 'the cult of the personality' to its damage only to Stalin's reputation; any excess of zeal by the security agencies could be cured by consolidated Party control. By refusing to embark on de-Stalinisation with the backing of the Party cadres, Dej managed to reinforce his own control of the Party and bind it more closely to his person.

The rising in Hungary in 1956 allowed the Romanian leadership to demonstrate its fidelity to the Soviet Union. The Romanian Government echoed Soviet propaganda, denouncing the 'counter-revolution' as the work of 'reactionary Fascists' provoked by 'Western imperialists'. Romania provided the necessary logistic support for the Soviet forces invading Hungary. Soviet satisfaction with Romania's role during October and November 1956 stood

to the country's advantage two years later when Khrushchev's decided to withdraw Soviet troops.

The most significant impact of Soviet withdrawal upon the Romanian leadership was a psychological one. Romania was still tied firmly within the Soviet bloc. Soviet air and naval bases remained on Romanian territory and Soviet divisions in the southern Ukraine and across the Prut in the Moldavian Republic could descend at once in an emergency. Nevertheless, whatever the Soviet motives for the withdrawal, Dej could regard it as a concession wrought from the Soviets; with the confidence thus gained, he could embark, albeit cautiously, on policies which placed Romanian above Soviet interests.

To compensate for the Soviet withdrawal and to allay Soviet fears that it might demolish the underpinning of the Romanian regime, Dej approved the immediate introduction of stringent internal security measures in order to maintain the Party's control. Amendments were made to the Penal Code which were even more Draconian in their remit than the provisions for the death penalty enacted in 1949. Under a decree of 21 July 1958, new crimes attracting the death penalty were defined and extended to any Romanians contacting foreigners to perpetrate an act 'which could cause the Romanian state to become involved in a declaration of neutrality or in the declaration of war'. This was clearly designed to deter those who might be tempted by the example of Imre Nagy in Hungary who, during the 1956 revolution, proclaimed his country's neutrality and thus, implicitly, its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. That temptation might prove even greater in the absence of a Soviet occupation force. The definition of 'economic sabotage' was enlarged to include theft and bribery, as was that of so-called 'hooligan' offences committed by juveniles. By the autumn of 1958, the first death sentences for the new crimes were applied.⁵¹

Those sentenced to forced labour under the new measures were sent to penal colonies in the marsh areas of the Danube delta, notably at Periprava, to collect reeds for the recently constructed cellulose plants financed jointly by Romania, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. It was estimated in 1957 that a labour force of 25,000 would be required and this number

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

was achieved by transferring political and common law prisoners to join the newly sentenced convicts. An article in *Scînteia* of 5 February 1959 eulogised the achievements of the workers in the delta without mention of their status or of the appalling conditions in which they lived and worked. Although many intellectuals and peasants passed through these camps, the majority of labourers were young opponents of the regime between the ages of sixteen and twenty-five, large numbers of whom succumbed to the ravages of malaria and tuberculosis. In fact, the production figures from the camps were so disappointing that the regime was forced to recruit 'voluntary' labour whose working conditions were far better than those of the convicts and who received a wage.

A former detainee described the conditions in these penal colonies in an *émigré* journal in the early 1960s. The camp were located in four areas in the delta. The largest camps, like that of Salcia in the Balta Brăilei, housed up to 6,000 prisoners. The convicts had to work exclusively with their hands, standing waist-deep in the water and cutting the reeds with a scytheblade attached to a pole. After gathering the reeds into sheaves weighing about fifty kilos, they were forced to carry them on their backs for over a kilometre without allowing the reeds to touch the ground. Specially-trained dogs bit the men's heels if they wavered. The daily quota for each convict was fifteen sheaves and those who failed to fulfill it had their food ration reduced and were sometimes beaten on the soles of their feet. Prisoners who bore the letter 'CR', meaning 'counter-revolutionary', on the back of their hand were particularly ill-treated. Food consisted of several slices of bread with jam and a cup of coffee-substitute in the morning and a piece of cold polenta and soup at lunchtime and in the evenings.

The areas to be harvested were sealed off with barbed-wire and electrified fences and patrolled by guards on horseback and teams of dogs with handlers. Machine-gun points and floodlights were set up around the perimeter fences. The convicts returned each day having worked in the water to unheated and un-insulated wooden huts; not surprisingly, they regularly fell prey to illness, especially malaria. Medical care was virtually non-existent, with a total absence in some camps of medicines and dressings. The deathrate was high, inviting the charge that the authorities deliberately sought to liquidate the detainees. Rather, camp con-

ditions were testimony to a mentality which saw the convicts as expendable slaves, worthy only of the barest of essentials to ensure a work capacity but denied any care which might enhance it or indeed protect it.

A further decree of 1958 signalled another wave of purges from government employment of former officers in the royal army, former landowners, persons with a record of 'political' crime and the children of all the above. On a much more petty scale, divulging the location of Romanian archives also attracted the death penalty.⁵² In the prisons, discipline became noticeably harsher. Annie Samuelli, a prisoner for almost twelve years between 1949 and 1961, remembered how the warders' behaviour worsened overnight. 'They suddenly had a free hand to apply regulations literally and that included a fresh range of punishment, maliciously meted out.'⁵³

It was not just the exceptional severity of these new measures which sent a clear signal to the Romanian people that the regime of terror was not to be relaxed; the failure to publicise them in the press or on the radio (the provisions were merely printed in the *Monitorul Oficial*, the official gazette) generated uncertainty about the legislation and so amplified the fear inculcated into the population. The apparent randomness in the legislation's application by the instruments of the police state served perfectly to enhance the regime's control by terror.

After the Hungarian uprising, Dej began to make a distinction between the Soviet model and the Soviet Union. In choosing the former, Dej took his Party and the country on a new course of autonomy from his Soviet overlord by refusing to accept for Romania the role within Comecom of 'breadbasket' for the industrialised members such as East Germany and Czechoslovakia. There is also a paradox here; Dej's commitment to the Leninist-Stalinist values of industrialisation turned him into a 'national Communist'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, this same consistency as a Stalinist eventually led to a diminution of institutionalised terror.⁵⁵

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ A. Samuelli, *The Wall Between*, Washington, DC: Robert B. Luce, 1967, p. 187.

⁵⁴ M. Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society*, London: Pinter, 1985, p. 48.

⁵⁵ W. Bacon, Jr., 'Romanian Secret Police' in J.R. Adelman (ed.), *Terror and Communist Politics: The Role of the Secret Police in Communist States*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984, p. 144.

The rift with Moscow was produced gradually and unevenly, with fluctuations in its development. The principles of what came to be known as Romanian national Communism were laid down in a public declaration of autonomy, entitled *Statement on the Stand of the Romanian Workers' Party Concerning the Problems of the World Communist and Working Class Movement* which was published in *Scînteia* on 23 April 1964. In it the Party rejected Khrushchev's plans to give Comecon a supranational economic planning role and it is to this rejection that the beginnings of a distinct Romanian line in economic and foreign can be traced. With these changes came a notable shift in the severity of police rule. Dej authorised the opening of the political prisons in 1962 and, according to official figures, 1,304 prisoners were released. In the following year, an additional 2,892 were freed and in the first four months of 1964, the 'final' 464 were allowed out.⁵⁶ Other official figures, quoted but unsourced, indicate that approximately 12,750 prisoners were released between 1962 and 1965.⁵⁷ How accurately these figures indicate the numbers of political prisoners held in Romanian prisons at the time (i.e. some 4,600) is open to grave doubt. Even admitting that many of those arrested in the late 1940s and early 1950s perished in prison, one only needs to recall the large numbers arrested and re-arrested after the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the waves of arrests after the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Until the publication of prison files from that period, it will not be possible to determine how great a parody of the truth these figures are, but it is safe to assume that the numbers detained for 'political' offences at the time of the amnesty ran into tens of thousands.

Khrushchev's removal on 14 October 1964 as Soviet leader offered Dej a further chance to consolidate his break with Moscow. Exploiting the change in the Soviet leadership, he summoned the Soviet ambassador on 21 October and requested him to withdraw the KGB counsellors from Romania. Moscow reacted quickly and furiously. On the following day, the Chairman of the KGB, Vladimir Yefimovici Semichastny, sent a telegram to Drăghici, reminding him that Romania lived 'under the Soviet

⁵⁶ V. Georgescu, *The Romanians: A History*, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1991, p. 246.

⁵⁷ A. Scarfe, 'Romanian Baptists and the State', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 4, no 2 (Summer 1976), p. 20.

protective umbrella' and that it would regret Dej's move. A similar telegram from General Aleksandr Sakharovsky, former MGB adviser in Bucharest and now head of the First Chief Directorate, landed on the desk of General Nicolae Doicaru, the head of Romanian Foreign Intelligence (*Directia Generală de Informații Externe* – DGIE). In November, Sakharovsky arrived unexpectedly at Bucharest, followed by Semichastny.⁵⁸

The discussions between Dej and the new Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, in connection with the withdrawal of KGB counsellors from Bucharest went on until the end of November and also involved Aleksandr Shelepin, who until December 1961 had been KGB chairman and had been moved to head the Committee of Party and State Control which oversaw the work of the KGB. Sakharovsky was particularly wounded, since he had nursed the DGSP into being in 1948. Eventually the Soviet leadership capitulated and in December 1964 the counsellors were withdrawn, being allowed to take all the contents of the flats which they had requisitioned. Thus the Romanian security and intelligence services became the first such agencies of a Warsaw Pact country to rid itself of its Soviet counsellors, and, as regards the DGIE, the only foreign intelligence agency in the Eastern bloc to enjoy this privilege down to the collapse of Communism in 1989. This did not mean, of course, that it ceased to collaborate with the KGB.

A condition of the withdrawal of KGB counsellors was that the DGIE should continue to meet Romania's obligations under the Warsaw Pact to play its part in the espionage activities co-ordinated by the Soviet Union. Moscow established the defence field as the chief priority of intelligence gathering in the 1960s and emphasis was placed on scientific and technical espionage. Both the First Chief Directorate of the KGB, charged with foreign intelligence, and the GRU set the agenda for their counterpart bodies in the Warsaw Pact states. In Romania's case, this was the DGIE and the *Departamentul de Informații al Armatei* (DIA), successor to the Second Section of the Romanian Army General Staff. Soviet activity in scientific and technical espionage was co-ordinated by the Soviet Military Industrial Commission (VPK),

⁵⁸ I. Pacepa, *Moștenirea Kremlinului*, Bucharest: Editura Venus, 1993, p. 253.

with the United States, West Germany, France and Britain chosen as the principal targets.

Collaboration between the KGB and the DGIE on the one hand and the GRU and the DIA on the other served a dual purpose for the Soviets; not only was the intelligence gathered for Soviet needs but the Romanian officers concerned were not asked to distinguish a loyalty to Romania from one to the Soviet Union in their operational activities in the 1960s, since the intelligence objectives of both countries coincided. Furthermore, the Soviet training of most of the Romanian intelligence and security officers cemented an extra bond with the Soviet master. It was in these conditions that an ambiguity in Soviet-Romanian relations emerged. For while Dej's anti-Soviet measures of 1963 signalled a cooling of relations with Moscow, the rift was not so deep as to stop Romanian collaboration in intelligence and security matters.

Indeed, the DGIE scored a number of notable successes on behalf of the KGB in the early 1960s. In 1962 Mihai Caraman, a DGIE officer in Paris, recruited François Roussilhe, a Frenchman who worked in the library of NATO headquarters, to provide him with hundreds of secret documents. Caraman's catch was considered so important by the KGB that they decided to pay the Frenchman in gold coins, which Caraman received from Moscow. In the following year, Caraman took over the running of Turkish colonel, Nahit Imre, who had been recruited by the DGIE in Ankara and transferred to Paris as Deputy Financial Director of NATO. In order to exploit to the full these two contacts, Caraman was summoned on several occasions to Moscow. In 1965, the KGB was so impressed by the amount of material coming from NATO via Caraman that they sent one of their own officers, Vladimir Arhipov, to work with Caraman. All went well till 1969, when Col. Ion Iacobescu, Caraman's deputy in Paris, asked for political asylum in the United States. Shortly afterwards, Roussilhe and Imre were arrested and Caraman was withdrawn.

By striking the chord of deep anti-Soviet sentiment felt by most Romanians, Dej's rift with Moscow attracted support for his regime, even among the newly-released prisoners, who saw the amnesty solely in terms of the rift and of Dej's new 'liberalism'. They did not, however, forget that it was the same Dej who

had authorised measures sending them to jail in the first place. The amnesty marked the end of an era of political terror which had cost the lives of thousands of Romanians belonging to the pre-Communist political, economic and cultural elite, yet the instrument of that terror, the *Securitate*, still remained intact, unreformed and ubiquitous. It and its powerful and ambitious head, the Minister of the Interior Alexandru Drăghici, who had held office since May 1952, remained a constant reminder of the past and a threat to the present and future.

ANNEX 1

THE STRUCTURE OF THE DGSP, 1948

Director General Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Pintilie
Deputy directors Maj. Gen. Alexandru Nicolschi, Maj. Gen. Vladimir Mazuru

Secretariat

Director Maj. Wilhelm Einhorn
Heads of Bureau Capt. Dumitru Donescu, Capt. Emanoil Schmerler
Heads of Section Capt. Nicolae Mateescu, Capt. Alexandru Jurică

Directorate I

Director Col. Gavril Birtaş
Deputy director Lieut. Col. Andrei Glavaciov
Heads of Service Maj. Ionel Negreanu, Capt. Mauriciu Adam,
Capt. Heinz Stănescu, Capt. Aurelian Ionescu

Directorate II

Director Col. Gogu Popescu
Deputy director Maj. Gheorghe Bulz
Heads of Service Capt. Ilie Sariceleanu, Maj. Maximilian Vardan,
Capt. Mihai Andriescu

Directorate III

Director Maj. Coman Stoilescu
Heads of Service Capt. Augustin Cosma, Lieut. Grigore Filipescu

Directorate IV

Director Maj. Gheorghe Petrescu
Deputy director Capt. Cricor Garabeţian
Heads of Service Capt. Boris Caranicolov, Capt. Ilarion Savenco,
Capt. Andrei Ciupergea, Lieut. Gheorghe Mihailescu

Directorate V

Directors Col. Mişa Dulgheru, Col. Mircea Lepădătescu
Deputy Directors Lieut. Col. Simion Tudor Diacă
Head of Service Capt. Matusei Andriescu, Capt. Grigore Stetcovici

Directorate VI

Director Lieut. Col. Augustin Albin
Deputy Director Maj. Ion Crişan
Heads of Service Lieut. Traian Predescu, Capt. Dionisie Dobre,
Lieut. Andrei Tulbure

Directorate VII

Director Lieut. Col. Alexandru Neacșu*Head of Service* Maj. Cornel Goliumbovici

Directorate VIII

Deputy Maj. Dumitru Popescu

Directorate IX

Deputies Maj. Alexandru Gutan, Maj. Nicolae Duță*Head of Service* Capt. Milo Artonovici

Directorate X

Director Col. Alexandru Jurnu*Deputy* Maj. Ion Ceslanschi*Head of Service* Capt. Mihalache Bujor

Directorate of Security: Bucharest

Director Lieut. Col. Tudor Sepeneanu*Deputy* Maj. Moise Senater*Heads of Service* Maj. Avram Solomon, Maj. Dumitru Maxim,

Capt. Vasile Feneșan, Maj. Ștefan Niculescu

Local offices Oltenița, Brănești, Căciulați, Buftea, Domnești

Regional Directorate: Brașov

Director Col. Iosif Kalbusek*Deputy* Maj. Adalbert Izsak*Local offices* Zărnești, Codlea, Feldioara*County office* Făgăraș*Local office* Arpașul de Jos*County office* Odorhei*Local offices* Cristuri, Ocand*County office* Trei Scaune*Local offices* Țirgu Secuiesc, Covasna, Baraolt*County office* Ciuc*Local offices* Gheorgheni, Tulgheș, Săn Martin, Lunca de Jos

Regional Directorate: Cluj

Director Col. Mihai Patriciu*Deputy* Lieut. Col. Gheorghe Cuteanu*Local office* Huedin*County office* Mureș*Local offices* Reghin, Sovata, Toplița,*County office* Turda*Head* Capt. Mihail Kovaces*Deputy* Lieut. Jacob Weigner

Local offices Cîmpeni, Râzboieni

County office Năsăud

Head Maj. Viorel Gligor

Deputy Lieut. Andrei Lote

Local offices Romuli, Rodna

County office Someș

Head Maj. Nicolae Briceag

Deputy Lieut. Ioan Rusu

Local office Gherla

Regional Directorate: Constanța

Director Capt. Nicolae Doicaru

Deputies Lieut. Năstase Repi, Lieut. Gheorghe Manolache

Local offices Mangalia, Medgidia, Ostrov, Vasile Roaită,

Negru Vodă, Cernavodă, Hirșova

County office Ialomița

Head Capt. Ion Iacob

Deputy Lieut. Dumitriu Miu

Local offices Urziceni, Slobozia, Fetești

County office Tulcea

Head Nicolae Pul

Local offices Sulina, Babadag, Isaccea, Măcin, Topolog

Regional Directorate: Craiova

Director Maj. Eugen Vistig

Deputy Maj. Ion Vasilescu

Local offices Filiași, Calafat, Bailești

County office Vâlcea

Head Maj. Nicolae Filip

Local offices Horezu, Calimănești, Drăgășani, Brezoiu

County office Gorj

Head Capt. Gheorghe Năbădan

Local offices Bumbești, Novaci

County office Mehedinți

Head Capt. Ioan Georgescu

Local offices Baia de Aramă, Strehaia

County office Romanați

Head Maj. Ilie Enescu

Local offices Corabia, Balș

Regional Directorate: Galați

Director Col. Mauriciu Strul

Deputy Maj. Gheorghe Babu

Local offices Berești, Foltești, Pechea

County office Putna
Local offices Adjud, Odobești, Panciu, Mărășești, Vizantea, Năruja
County office Brăila
Head Capt. Dumitru Raceu
Deputy Lieut. Matei Dănilă
Local offices Nicolești-Jianu, Făurei, Iarca, Viziru
County office Râmnicu Sărat
Head Maj. Nicolae Gabrielescu
Deputies Lieut. Alexandru Sichiklev, Lieut. Barel Orenstein
Local offices Dumitrești, Gugești Ciorăști, Boldu
County office Tecuci
Local offices Ivești, Podul Turcului, Stăniliești
County office Tutova
Local offices Murgeni, Puiești, Ghidigeni

Regional Directorate: Iași

Director Lieut. Nicolae Pandlea
Deputy Maj. Aurel Ceia
Local offices Țîrgul Frumos, Bivolari
County office Neamț
Local offices Buhuși, Țîrgu Neamț, Borca, Roman, Băcești
County office Bacău
Head Capt. Paul Zelțer
Local offices Țîrgu Ocna, Comănești, Moinești
County office Falcu
County office Vaslui

Regional Directorate: Oradea

Director Lieut. Ludovic Czeller
Heads of Service Capt. Toma Elekis, Capt. Tiberiu Grad,
 Capt. Nicolae Drențea, Capt. Ioan Retezan
Local offices Beiuș, Salonta, Episcopia Bihorului, Marghita
County office Salaj
Local offices Carei, Valea Iui Mihai, Șimleul Silvaniei, Jibău
County office Satu Mare
Head Capt. Ludovic Weisz
Local office Baia Mare
County office Maramureș
Head Capt. Alexandru Mureșan
Local office Valea Vișeuului

Regional Directorate: Pitești

Director Col. Mihail Nedelcu

Deputy Maj. Ioan Marin

Local offices Curtea de Argeş, Costeşti, Stoiceni

County office Muscel

Head Maj. Mihail Chicaş

Local offices Rucăr, Domneşti, Topoloveni

County office Olt

Head Capt. Ioan Bordei

Local offices Drăgăneşti, Potcoava, Spineni

County office Dîmboviţa

Head Capt. Ştefan Manoiu

Local offices Pucioasa, Gura Ocnitei, Găieşti, Răcari, Titu

County office Teleorman

Local offices Zimnicea, Roşioru de Vde, Alexandria, Balaci

Regional Directorate: Ploieşti

Director Lieut. Col. Constantin Cîmpeanu

Deputy Maj. Racovschi Mănescu

Local offices Cîmpina, Moreni, Sinaia, Buşteni, Predeal, Slănic, Urlaţi,
Văleni, Băicoi

County office Buzău

Head Capt. Mihail Holofcov

Local offices Pătirlagele, Mizil, Pogoanele

County office Vlaşca

Local offices Vidra, Drăgăneşti, Pietroşani

Regional Directorate: Sibiu

Director Lieut. Col. Gheorghe Crăciun

Deputy Capt. Lucian Moldor

Local office Cişnădie

County office Alba

Head Capt. Iacob Popa

Local offices Sebeş, Abrud, Aiud

County office Hunedoara

Local offices Petroşani, Lupeni, Simeria, Cugir, Brad, Orăştie, Haţeg

County office Tîmava Mică

Head Capt. Iuliu Trapovescu

Local offices Tîrnăveni, Dumbrăveni

County office Tîmava Mare

Head Capt. Ion Buzescu

Local offices Copşa Mică, Mediaş

Regional Directorate: Suceava

Director Lieut. Col. Ioan Popic

Local offices Solca, Dărmănești

County office Baia

Head Maj. Iacob Fuchs

Local offices Pașcani, Lespezi

County office Botoșani

Head Capt. Israil Ruckerstein

Local offices Hîrlău, Ștefănești

County office Cîmpulung

Head Capt. Dumitru Petru

Local offices Vatra Dornei, Gura Humorului, Vama

County office Dorohoi

Head Capt. Nicolae Morărescu

Local offices Mihăileni, Săveni, Darabani

County office Rădăuți

Head Capt. Carol Iludescu

Local office Siret

Regional Directorate: Timișoara

Director Lieut. Col. Coloman Ambraș

Deputy Maj. Aurel Moiş

Local offices Jimbolia, Lipova, Sînnicolaul Mare, Deta, Rehaș

County office Arad

Head Maj. Alexandru Rafvla

Local offices Sebeș, Curtici, Chișinău-Criș

County office Severin

Head Maj. Zoltan Kling

Local offices Caransebeș, Făget, Orșova, Herculane

County office Caraș

Head Lieut. Iosif Hahamu

Local offices Reșița, Moldova Nouă, Anina

ANNEX 2

COMPOSITION OF THE DGSP BY ETHNIC BACKGROUND, 1948

<i>Total number of personnel of all ranks</i>	3,973
Armenians	3
Bulgarians	3
Italians	1
Czechs	5
Germans	5
Hungarians	247
Jews	338
Romanians	3,334
Russians	24
Yugoslavs	13

NATIONAL DIRECTORATES

<i>Total number of personnel of all ranks</i>	1,151
Armenians	1
Bulgarians	1
Germans	3
Hungarians	10
Jews	148
Romanians	981
Russians	7

REGIONAL DIRECTORATES

<i>Total number of personnel of all ranks</i>		2,822
Bucharest	Armenians 1; Hungarians 1; Jews 16; Romanians 286; Russians 1	305
Braşov	Czechs 1; Germans 1; Hungarians 72; Jews 7; Romanians 115; Russians 1;	197
Cluj	Czechs 1; Hungarians 51; Jews 36; Romanians 173; Russians 2	263
Constanţa	Germans 1; Jews 2; Romanians 135; Russians 11	149
Craiova	Jews 1; Romanians 233	234
Galaţi	Bulgarians 1; Jews 11; Romanians 239; Russians 2	253

Iași	Italians 1; Jews 35; Romanians 156	192
Oradea Mare	Armenians 1; Hungarians 60; Jews 34; Romanians 133	228
Pitești	Jews 1; Romanians 193	194
Ploiești	Jews 1; Romanians 195	196
Sibiu	Bulgarians 1, Hungarians 26, Jews 1; Romanians 198	226
Suceava	Jews 34; Romanians 138	172
Timișoara	Czechs 3; Hungarians 27, Jews 11; Romanians 159; Yugoslavs 13	213

ANNEX 3

THE ORGANISATION OF THE ROMANIAN
SECURITY SERVICE, 1948-64

All information presented below on the organisation of the Romanian security services down to 1964 is taken from *Organizarea și funcționarea Organelor Ministerului de Interne de la Înființare până în prezent*, Bucharest: Ministry of the Interior, 1978, 144 pp. I am grateful to the relevant authorities in Romania for allowing me to consult this document.

1. Organisation of the DGSP (*Direcția Generală a Securității Poporului*) as established by decree on 30 August 1948:

Directorates

- I Domestic Intelligence
- II Counter-sabotage
- III Counter-espionage in the Prisons and Police
- IV Counter-espionage in the Armed Forces
- V Penal Investigation
- VI Protection of Ministers
- VII Technical
- VIII Cadres
- IX Political (responsible for Party purity)
- X Administration

Auxiliary departments dealt with interception of mail, surveillance and eavesdropping and further included a cipher section and a secretariat. Thirteen regional directorates, including that for the city of Bucharest, were established.

2. By Decree no 50 (30 March 1951) the DGSP is referred to by the new name of the DGSS (*Direcția Generală a Securității Statului*), which was structured as follows:

Directorates

- A Foreign Intelligence
- B Counter-espionage
- C Counter-sabotage
- D Transport
- E Counter-espionage in the Militia

- F Surveillance
- G Penal Investigation
- H Counter-espionage in the Armed Forces
- I Protection of Party leadership
- J Cadres and Schools
- K Administration
- L Political

There were also departments for accounts, records, interception of mail, transport of secret documents and a secretariat. To reflect the local government reorganisation of September 1950 when the counties (*județe*) were combined to form twenty-eight regions, the number of regional directorates was increased to match this figure.

3. The Ministry of State Security (*Ministerul Securității Statului*) was set up as a distinct body from the Ministry of the Interior on 20 September 1952. It incorporated the DGSS.

4. On 7 September 1953, the Ministry of State Security was amalgamated with the Ministry of the Interior.

5. The Ministry of the Interior was reorganised on 11 July 1956 and divided into two departments: the Department of Security (*Departamentul Securității*) and the Department of the Interior (*Departamentul Interioarelor*). The latter was given responsibility for the militia and prisons while the former inherited the structure of the DGSS with the following modifications:

Directorates

- I Foreign Intelligence
- II Counter-espionage
- III Domestic Intelligence
- IV Counter-sabotage
- V Counter-espionage in the Armed Forces
- VI Transport
- VII Surveillance
- VIII Penal Investigation
- IX Protection of Party Leadership

Directorate of Cadres and Schools

Directorate of Administration

Secretariat

Departments

- B Radio Counter-intelligence
- C Records

- D Transport of Prisoners
- F Interception of Mail
- H Cipher
- K Counter-espionage in the Prisons and Militia
- T Technical

A school for training officers and one for learning foreign languages was also placed under the control of the DS, as were the security troops and the frontier guards.

6. On 30 May 1963, the control of the security troops was removed from the DS and placed under a separate department within the Ministry of the Interior. By the same decree of 30 May, Directorate I (Foreign Intelligence) of the DS was redesignated UM (*Unitate militară*) 0123/1 and given the name *Direcția Generală de Informații Externe* (DGIE).

3

FROM TERROR TO FEAR: NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU AND THE *SECURITATE*, 1965-1978

Nicolae Ceaușescu emerged on 22 March 1965 as the First Secretary of a Communist Party inextricably linked with the terror of Romania's post-war history. Born on 26 January 1918, the third of ten children of a poor peasant family in the south-western district of Oltenia, Ceaușescu himself could point to a youth spent on the wrong side of authority. After leaving home at the age of eleven to find work in Bucharest, he joined the Communist Party as a teenager and went to prison on four separate occasions between 1933 and 1938 for his political convictions (the Party had been outlawed since 1924). By 1936, he was a secretary of a regional committee of the Union of Communist Youth (UCY) and two years later was promoted to Secretary of the UCY's Central Committee. In September 1939, he was tried *in absentia* and sentenced to three and a half years in gaol. He continued to work underground until July 1940, when he was finally caught.¹

During the war, Ceaușescu was held in various prisons until, in August 1943, he was moved to the internment camp at Țirgu Jiu, where he remained until the overthrow of Antonescu in August 1944. It was here that he met senior members of the Romanian Communist Party, among them Gheorghiu-Dej, Chivu Stoica, who became President of the Council of State when Ceaușescu was later elected First Secretary, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who served as prime minister under both Dej and Ceaușescu. After release, Ceaușescu occupied a number of Party

¹ For these biographical details I am indebted to Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1989, pp. 24-31, 47-65.

posts before being made Regional Secretary for Oltenia in November 1946 in preparation for the general election due that month. It was during the campaign that Ceaușescu's irascibility allegedly got him into an argument with a bank manager in the town of Slatina which resulted in the latter being stabbed to death. Whether the guilty party was Ceaușescu or one of his henchmen is not clear but the incident, if true, highlighted both Ceaușescu's violent temper for which he was later to become notorious and the brutish tactics employed by the Communist Party.

Ceaușescu's experience of local Party work undoubtedly made him particularly useful to Dej as the planks in the platform of Communisation of Romania were put into place. When the programme for the collectivisation of agriculture was announced in March 1949, Ceaușescu was moved to the Ministry of Agriculture as a deputy minister. In the following year, he was transferred to the same position in the Ministry of Armed Forces, with special responsibility for the 'Higher Political Directorate of the Army', the Party body set up to bring into being a People's Army. In was in this capacity that Ceaușescu served an invaluable apprenticeship for ensuring his complete control of the armed forces when he later acquired dictatorial power.

When Dej purged his major rivals in May 1952, he promoted Ceaușescu to full membership of the Central Committee and, after the execution of Pătrășcanu in April 1954, he made both Ceaușescu and Drăghici candidate members of the Politburo and full members in the following year. The growth in Party membership that Dej called for at the 1955 Party Congress was supervised by Ceaușescu in his capacity as Central Committee Secretary for organisation and cadres. This control exerted by Ceaușescu over Party appointments for much of the following decades gave him a powerful base from which to seek election as Party leader after the death of Dej on 19 March 1965 and, subsequently, to consolidate his position.

On paper Ceaușescu was but one of a number of senior Party officials who could put a case for election to the leadership. Yet only Drăghici, Chivu Stoica and Gheorghe Apostol were not ruled out from the post by virtue of their ethnic background, the other Politburo members being of part Bulgarian (Coliu), Ukrainian (Bodnăraș) or German (Maurer) origin. As the long-serving Minister of Internal Affairs, Drăghici was feared by

everyone; Stoica was not considered up to the job and Apostol was deemed too headstrong. According to one inside source, Ceaușescu did a deal with Maurer: Ceaușescu would nominate Maurer as Prime Minister (he did so on 12 March) and, in exchange, after Dej's death, Maurer would nominate Ceaușescu as First Secretary. In this way, Ceaușescu outmanoeuvred Apostol, who allegedly was Dej's choice as successor.² Stoica was bought off with the post of President of the Council of State.

Relaxation of the terror instituted by Dej characterised the early years of Nicolae Ceaușescu's leadership of the Romanian Communist Party. On succeeding Dej, Ceaușescu continued those policies which had turned his predecessor into a national Communist: rapid industrialisation accompanied by an autonomous line in foreign policy. In 1967, Romania became the first country in the Eastern bloc to establish diplomatic relations with West Germany and it did not break diplomatic ties with Israel after the Six Day War. The most forceful affirmation of independence from Soviet dictates was Ceaușescu's refusal to participate in and his condemnation of the Warsaw Pact intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Growing recognition of Romania's political usefulness as a thorn in the flesh of the Soviet Union prompted a period of increasing Western courtship of Ceaușescu, exemplified by President Nixon's visit in August 1969. The Romanian leader returned the visit in December 1970. There followed a succession of economic favours. In 1971 Romania was admitted to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and in 1972 it was accepted into the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The country's trading position was further enhanced when the country acquired preferential trading status with the European Community (EC) in 1973. In March 1975, President Ford of the United States granted Romania most-favoured-nation status and Ceaușescu visited the United States again in April 1978. Three months later he was given an honour unprecedented to the head of a Warsaw Pact country: a state visit to the United Kingdom. By removing his principal rivals in the Party, Ceaușescu was able to take the sole credit for these successes, and after 1968 he

² S. Brucan, *The Wasted Generation: Memoirs of the Romanian Journey from Capitalism to Socialism and Back*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993, p. 111.

emerged as the uncontested leader. He consolidated his control over the country by creating the position of President of the Republic in 1974, and the ceremony of his swearing into office was more like a coronation than a presidential inauguration. His appointment as President marked the intensification of a personality cult which he fuelled with his foreign policy successes.

In pursuing an autonomous foreign policy Ceaușescu was able not only to offer the West an opportunity to exploit an apparent breach in the Communist bloc but to draw on his people's dislike for their Soviet overlord as well. Autonomy led axiomatically to greater popularity and, inevitably, to a cultivation of national sentiment, appeals to which were made in addressing the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and in raising the issue of Bessarabia. Promotion of the national interest was the claim which underpinned Ceaușescu's autonomous policies *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union but his efforts to advance that claim upon gaining power in 1965 were compromised by the association of the Romanian Communist Party (to which title the Romanian Workers' Party reverted in June 1965) with the terror of the previous two decades, while the presence of Alexandru Drăghici as Minister of the Interior was a constant reminder of that association. Furthermore, in the manoeuvring for the succession to Dej, Drăghici had emerged as an opponent of Ceaușescu, being the sole abstainer in the vote taken in the Politburo to elect Ceaușescu as the new First Secretary.³ Removal of Drăghici from his position of power would not only enable Ceaușescu to consolidate his own position as undisputed leader of the Party but would also allow him to attenuate the regime's link with terror. The very fact that Ceaușescu sought as a prime objective to bring the Ministry of the Interior fully under Party and, ultimately, his own control was an indication of his priorities.

The first move was directed against the Ministry of Internal Affairs (which became the Ministry of the Interior in April 1972) and the DS (*Departamentul Securității*). A measure of judicial supervision was brought to the activities of both bodies through the application of the principle of 'socialist legality', which was embodied in the new constitution proposed in June 1965 that

³ E. Mezincescu, 'Din nou despre fantoma lui Dej', *România literară*, no. 41 (16-22 December 1992), p. 14.

declared Romania to be a Socialist republic in place of a People's Republic. More power was invested in the courts and a twenty-four hour limit was placed on the time that a citizen could be held without being charged. Like most legislation, however, its application was arbitrary.

The second move was the replacement in July 1965 of Drăghici as Minister of Internal Affairs by his deputy Cornel Onescu, a Ceaușescu protégé who had studied at the Moscow Party School in the 1950s (Onescu was replaced in April 1972). Drăghici's removal was the result of a major change in the Party statutes which was engineered by Ceaușescu at the Ninth Congress of the RCP held between 19 and 24 July 1965. Article 13 (b) of the statutes was revised to read: 'A member of the Party may only hold one position of political leadership which necessitates full-time activity, whether it is in the Party organs or the state organs.'⁴ To comply with the article, Drăghici was obliged to give up the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which he had directed since 1952, so that he could remain a member of the Party secretariat. Although he continued to supervise security matters by sharing responsibility in the secretariat for military and security affairs with Vasile Patilineț, his departure from the Ministry of Internal Affairs denied him his power base and made it easier for Ceaușescu to denounce and then oust him from the Party leadership in April 1968.

Drăghici's removal also signalled a firm intention on the part of Ceaușescu to bring the DS back fully under Party control. The Ninth Congress marked the end of Pintilie's murderous career at the head of the various parts of the security apparatus, for he failed to be re-elected to the Central Committee (he died in Bucharest on 11 August 1985 aged eighty-three). With Drăghici, Ceaușescu adopted caution, for his rival remained an influential figure and it was only two years later, in the summer of 1967, that he orchestrated the former Interior Minister's demise. It was suggested to Drăghici that he might like to take a holiday in the West and in his absence during the month of June, Ceaușescu called a Central Committee plenum. Its decisions were made public in the following month in a speech to Party activists in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in which Ceaușescu stressed the

⁴ Fischer, p. 79.

leading role of the Party and congratulated the Ministry on its achievements, conceding that 'in the first years after their inception the security bodies lacked experience and ability; sometimes [they] also got erroneous guidance'.⁵

'Erroneous' was a euphemism for 'Soviet', and as he continued his address the Party leader drew attention to the mistakes of the past, identifying many of them with the 'beginning', i.e. the period of Soviet dominance:

In the course of years, especially at the beginning, there was sometimes a lack of political discernment in the activity of the security bodies, no distinction being made between hostile activity, directed against revolutionary gains of the people and some manifestations linked to the natural process of transforming the people's conscience and mode of thinking.⁶

This had led to 'abuses of socialist legality' which had also been committed against:

Party and state activists who, in certain circumstances, had different views concerning some aspects of the political line or made mistakes in their activity. Instead of such problems being solved by discussions on a Party line, they were sometimes deferred to the security bodies, creating conditions for the latter's interference in Party life, gravely prejudicing the authority and leading role of the Party.⁷

Ceaușescu ruled such mistakes 'inadmissible' in the future and declared that the Ministry could no longer act as a law unto itself, 'avoiding Party control'. Hammering home his attack, he went on:

It is clear that there is no kind of secret of matter of a conspirative character that could or can be a reason for an organ, and the more so for a security organ, to avoid Party control, an organ which, owing to the specific nature of its work and

⁵ N. Ceaușescu, 'Speech at the Meeting of the Basic Active of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 18 July 1967', *Romania on the Way of Completing Socialist Construction Reports*, vol. 2, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1969, p. 374.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁷ *Ibid.*

attributions, must permanently be under the guidance and control of the Party bodies.⁸

Emphasising the primacy of the Party over the *Securitate*, he declared that 'no citizen could be arrested without a grounded and proved reason' and, in particular, 'no activist and no Party member generally should be investigated or arrested without the approval of the Party bodies'.⁹

In the same speech, Ceaușescu announced a measure to prevent the accumulation of power within the Ministry of the Interior by a single person, therefore making an indirect criticism of Drăghici. He reported the Central Committee's decision at the same June plenum to reorganise the Ministry and place the DS under the control of a new *Consiliul Securității Statului* (Council of State Security—CSS), which would answer to the Party and the government.¹⁰ The CSS was formally set up under Decree 710, dated 22 July 1967; it was to be part of the Ministry of the Interior but it was given its own president with the rank of minister and the office of First Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs as well as three vice-presidents. In the same sequence of reform, the DS was itself reorganised under Resolution 2306 (13 September 1967) of the Council of Ministers, the principal changes being the merging of the First (domestic intelligence) and Second (economic counter-espionage) Directorates into the *Direcția Generală de Informații Interne* (General Directorate of Domestic Intelligence—DGII) and the combination of the Third (counter-espionage) and Fourth (military counter-espionage) Directorates into the *Direcția Generală de Contraspionaj* (General Directorate of Counter-espionage—DGC) (see Annex 1, pp. 103-5).

This process of removing the *Securitate* from the control of the Ministry of the Interior continued with a further reform of the Ministry within a year and was co-ordinated with Ceaușescu's move to remove Drăghici from all positions of authority. On 3 April 1968, the Council of State, of which Ceaușescu was now President, issued two decrees relating to the Ministry of the Interior and the Council of State Security.¹¹ The first reorganised

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

¹¹ Fischer, p. 127.

the structure of the Ministry and the second separated the CSS from the Ministry and gave it independent status. The CSS's attributes were defined as 'the defence of state security against acts of sabotage, diversion, undermining of the national economy, as well as against actions undertaken by foreign espionage services, the organisation and implementation of military intelligence and counter-espionage and the protection of government and Party leaders'.¹²

Signs that the new era of 'legality', announced so frequently by Ceaușescu, was about to begin were given by the establishment of a bureau within the CSS to examine complaints about the *Securitate's* alleged past abuses (its first head was Lt. Col. Constantin Apostol) and by the passage of a further decree limiting the circumstances under which private homes could be entered without a warrant from a procurator.¹³ However, a vital measure in this sense, second in importance only to the constitution, according to Ceaușescu, was the new Penal Code, published in draft form in April 1968. Ceaușescu reiterated criticisms which had been addressed to the Ministry of the Interior in the previous July:

It is no secret for anybody that certain outrages have been committed over the years. The Penal Code must ensure the strict observance of Socialist legality, so that nobody may infringe upon it in any way or commit abuses...The main responsibility for the application of the laws devolves on our Party.¹⁴

Ion Stănescu, a Ceaușescu placeman, was appointed to head the CSS. He later became Minister of the Interior in April 1972 but held the post for less than a year. Lieut. Gen. Grigore Răduică, a DS officer, was made his deputy. Modifications to the regional organisation of the CSS followed from the reorganisation of local administration which passed into law in February 1968. Romania's sixteen regions were regrouped into thirty-nine counties and so the former regional directorates (*direcții regionale*) became county inspectorates (*inspectorate județene*). These changes did nothing to remove the bureaucracy of terror but the measures taken to introduce some sort of legal constraint and judicial supervision,

¹² *Organizarea și funcționarea*, p. 124.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁴ Quoted from Fischer, p. 127.

however superficial, to the activity of the *Securitate* marked the end of control by terror and substituted, as one analyst has put it, restrictive for prescriptive control.¹⁵ However, the fear engendered by the *Securitate* over two decades sufficed to make restrictive control just as efficient as prescriptive control in containing the dissent which remained muted following the general amnesty of 1964 and the popularity gained by Ceașescu's defiance of the Soviet Union during the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. The seal on the break with the terror of the past came at the plenum of the Central Committee of the Party in April 1968.

The final item presented at the plenum was the report on the *Rehabilitation of Certain RCP Activists*, which formed an integral part of Ceașescu's aim to introduce 'Socialist legality' into the activity of the Ministry of the Interior. A small commission of pre-war Party members, composed of Gheorghe Stoica, Vasile Patilineț, Nicolae Găină and Ion Popescu-Puțuri, had been set up in November 1965 to investigate abuses committed against Party activists, with the particular task of looking into the case of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Their report revealed that Pătrășcanu had been arrested on 28 April 1948 and that his activity was investigated for seventeen months by a commission comprising Teohari Georgescu, Iosif Rangheț and Alexandru Drăghici. At a meeting of the Cominform on 6 December 1949 'Dej described Pătrășcanu as an agent of Anglo-American espionage and these accusations led the investigating authorities to fabricate proofs to confirm them by any means possible'.¹⁶ According to the report, no reliable evidence was found against Pătrășcanu. He was handed over to the DGSP for interrogation and still no proof of his alleged treachery was found. Indeed, one of the charges levelled by Dej at Teohari Georgescu at the plenum of the Central Committee in May 1952 was that 'even after four years he had not completed the investigation of the counter-revolutionary and espionage activities of Pătrășcanu and Kofler'.¹⁷

The report went on to say that Drăghici, Georgescu's successor, set up a team 'to get at any cost evidence to justify the assertion

¹⁵ Bacon, 'Romanian Secret Police', p. 147.

¹⁶ Resolution of the Central Committee Regarding the Rehabilitation of Certain Party Activists', *Săptămîna*, 26 April 1968.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

that Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu had allegedly been an agent of the *Siguranța* and an Anglo-American spy'. Based on the information presented by Alexandru Drăghici, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RWP decided on 18 March 1954 'to proceed to the trial of the group of spies head by Pătrășcanu'. The trial took place from 6 to 13 April 1954 in violation of the most elementary procedural guarantees. The death sentence was pronounced on 14 April and on the night of 16-17 April 1954, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu was executed at the Jilava prison.¹⁸

Ceaușescu was able to deflect any criticism of his own implication in the decision to execute Pătrășcanu by pointing out that he did not become a member of the Political Bureau or Secretary of the Central Committee until 19 April. Conversely, he was able to implicate the members of the Political Bureau of the time in the decision; most importantly, this meant Drăghici but also included Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnăraș and Chivu Stoica, who were the only possible challengers to his power. All four were held responsible for allowing Pătrășcanu's trial to take place without ensuring themselves of the soundness of the accusations brought against him. The plenum resolution pointed out that Pătrășcanu's execution had taken place after Stalin's death when, 'in the USSR and other socialist countries there started a course toward the rehabilitation of some persons sentenced without justification'. Disregard for Party control had permitted the Ministry of the Interior to wrongfully expel and imprison Party members. The plenum took a very grave view of the fact that differences of opinion within the Party were regarded as a reason for penal investigation rather than resolved by discussion as well as the fact that in Party meetings and public speeches during that period, 'currency was given to the idea, which today is shown to be false, that in Romania abuses and transgressions of socialist legality had not taken place and that, therefore, the problem of post-mortem rehabilitation does not arise'.¹⁹

Dej was directly blamed for 'intervening in the enquiry [against Pătrășcanu], making suggestions as to how it should be carried out, adding notes to the reports of the interrogations, establishing what evidence should be obtained from those under interrogation

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; see also Fischer, pp. 130-1.

¹⁹ Fischer, p. 132.

and who else should be arrested'. Iosif Chisinevski was attacked for his part in concocting 'monstrous falsehoods and the breaking of the most elementary norms of justice' in stage-managing the trial. Drăghici was singled out for special condemnation because, instead of trying to establish the truth, 'he sought to obtain at any price proofs of guilt so that Pătrășcanu could be sentenced and executed'. He had been able to do this 'because the Ministry of the Interior had been removed from the control of the collective organs of the Central Committee, while the Minister had removed himself from their control and refused to accept subordination to them'²⁰ These conclusions led the plenum to decide on the 'posthumous political rehabilitation of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu' and to recommend that the others involved in his trial should also be rehabilitated.

The case of Ștefan Foriș was also taken up in the plenum resolution. It did not criticize his removal as General Secretary which it claimed had been necessary due to 'grave shortcomings' in his work, but it did dismiss as unfounded the accusation that he had been an informer of the *Siguranța*. Consequently, Foriș's 'execution' in 1946 'on the basis of a decision taken by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Teohari Georgescu, Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca' was condemned and he was granted posthumous rehabilitation.²¹ While the doubts persist about the reasons for Foriș's murder, there is an excuse for the belief that his rehabilitation was a move directed by Ceaușescu against Dej and his associates rather than one designed to establish the truth.

Gheorghe Pintilie (Bondarenko) is also said to have been attacked in the plenum for his role in Foriș's murder, but Ceaușescu's disapproval was shallow enough to allow him to decorate Pintilie in May 1971 on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Party, alongside his wife Ana Toma, who had allegedly been one of the witnesses against Pătrășcanu.²² Rehabilitation was also extended in the Central Committee plenum resolution to a number of Romanian Communists who had died in the Soviet Union between 1936 and 1938 during Stalin's purges; among them was

²⁰ *Scnteia*, 26 April 1968.

²¹ Fischer, p. 132.

²² V. Tismăneanu, 'Ceauescu's Socialism', *Problems of Communism*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 1985), p. 58, note 44.

Marcel Pauker, the husband of Ana. In view of the catalogue of condemnation adduced, the plenum's final act was hardly surprising. It removed Drăghici from the three senior Party bodies and recommended his dismissal as Vice-President of the Council of Ministers (announced on 27 April) because of his 'particular and direct responsibility' in the 'impermissible' actions against Pătrășcanu, his repressive measures against other Party members and his defiance during the 1968 meetings of the Presidium, Executive Committee and the Central Committee.²³

How Drăghici defended himself can be inferred from Ceaușescu's speech to the Bucharest Party delivered on 26 April. In it the latter expanded upon the decisions of the plenum, including those relating to the rehabilitations, in emotive language, describing Pătrășcanu's arrest and trial as 'a foul frame-up' and his execution 'a dastardly assassination'.²⁴ Foriș too was the victim of an 'assassination'. The charges brought against these two and against Vasile Luca, Ceaușescu continued, 'accuse and condemn Alexandru Drăghici as the organiser and executor of these criminal actions against the Party and State apparatus [and] accuse and condemn Gheorghiu-Dej, who initiated and sponsored these actions'. Instead of admitting his errors and expressing regret, Drăghici tried to justify his actions by 'cynically declaring that in fact he regretted his not managing to secure sufficient proofs to justify the crimes',²⁵ blaming this on the inefficiency of his subordinates and therefore implying that Pătrășcanu had been guilty.

Drăghici had defended the *Securitate's* methods by claiming that the *Siguranța* had acted in the same way towards Communists, an assertion that Ceaușescu called 'an insult to our security organs' because 'resorting to forgeries, to frame-ups, mystifications is not in line with the ethics of Communists'. In the same speech to the plenum Drăghici had also tried to shirk responsibility for the 'sentencing and assassination of Pătrășcanu' by referring to the struggle waged by the *Securitate* against 'counter-revolutionary' elements. This, in Ceaușescu's view, was a distortion of the truth, for it exaggerated the role of the security police:

In the course of years, attempts were made to accredit in the

²³ Fischer, p. 132.

²⁴ N. Ceaușescu, *Romania on the Way...*, vol. 3, p. 172.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Securitate ranks the idea that in fact it was the one that waged the struggle against the enemy. Already in 1956 we criticised this idea, emphasising that it was not the *Securitate* but the party that was the organiser and leader of the fight against the enemy.²⁶

The reference to 1956 was an interesting one, for in the resolution of the Central Committee on Rehabilitation published in *Scinteia* on 26 April 1968, reference was made to a meeting of the Politburo held in April 1956 which condemned the Minister of the Interior, i.e. Drăghici, for the abuses committed by the *Securitate* and for the removal of the Ministry of the Interior from Party control. It considered the self-criticism made by Drăghici at the time to be inadequate and that he had minimised the gravity of his failings. A decision was taken in that same meeting that the *Securitate* should be placed under a Committee for State Security, which would be separate from the Ministry of the Interior, but the decision was reversed later in circumstances which were not made clear. In this light, the resolution's claim that 'after the analysis conducted in April 1956, measures were taken to strengthen Party control over the *Securitate*' has a hollow ring to it. This view is supported by a passage in Ceașescu's speech to the Bucharest Party in which he goes even further by stating that at the April 1956 Politburo meeting a decision was taken to remove Drăghici from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the grounds that 'the Minister of Internal Affairs should no longer be a member of the Political Bureau, a fact which implied the immediate removal of Drăghici from office.' Opposition from Dej and Drăghici prevented this measure being implemented.²⁷

Despite the failure to bring Drăghici to heel in 1956, Ceașescu wanted, nevertheless, to present himself as an early critic of the Ministry of the Interior and at the same time to disassociate himself from its abuses. In an effort to give himself the credentials of a long-time supporter of Party primacy over the Ministry, he quoted in his speech criticisms which he claimed to have made at the 1956 Political Bureau meeting:

As far as the Ministry of Internal Affairs is concerned, Party spirit is as slender as Party control. Comrade Drăghici thinks

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 174-5.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p.179.

that he can do anything, because he has relations with Gheorghiu-Dej and is not accountable to anybody else...Comrade Drăghici does not work with the cadres: he does not take people into account [and] a large number of Party members are being dismissed from the security machinery under different pretexts. The year 1954 alone saw the dismissal of some 900 Party members. For three years now, that is since Drăghici is there, the Ministry of Internal Affairs has not had a united executive. This is the result of Drăghici's stand on the question of cadres. He likes to be surrounded by toadies. He poorly guides the security work.²⁸

It is very unlikely, as Mary Ellen Fischer argues, that Ceaușescu would have dared to express himself in these terms in 1956. He would have incurred the displeasure not only of Drăghici but also of Dej and other members of the Politburo involved in the Pătrășcanu affair. Such doubts were not raised about Ceaușescu's attack on Drăghici in April 1968.

In his speech to the Bucharest Party, Ceaușescu darted from one accusation to another against Drăghici, turning from a denunciation of the latter's 'prominent role' in the crimes committed against an individual, Pătrășcanu, to the more general abuse of placing the *Securitate* above the Party. One of the effects of this had been to hinder 'artistic activity and scientific research'. He then returned to the Pătrășcanu case, upbraiding Dej for having 'a grudge against Pătrășcanu'. Dej 'got all the statements of the investigated persons, studied them and made annotations on them, giving instructions for the further unfolding of the inquiry and concerning what statements had to be obtained'. Some of these documents, 'according to Drăghici's statements, had been destroyed in 1960 on Dej's order'. Iosif Chisinevski was also implicated; he had 'direct, non-intermediate and gravest responsibilities for the assassination of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu as well as for other juridical abuses and illegalities committed in that period'.²⁹

As Mary Ellen Fischer has noted, this interpretation of events is Ceaușescu's one and it is not known what other speakers at the plenum, including Drăghici, actually said.³⁰ Yet it is clear

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-8.

³⁰ Fischer, p. 134.

from Ceaușescu's speech that Drăghici did not take all of this criticism lying down. In defending himself, however, he fell into the fatal trap of ascribing his actions to his introduction of the Party line into the Ministry of the Interior. Ceaușescu retorted by asking: 'What line? For what had happened in that period at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the abuses and illegalities committed, do in no way represent the line of our Party. Such an allegation by Drăghici slanders the Party, its profoundly humanist policy, which sets out from solicitude for man.'³¹ These attributes of the Party must have seemed, in the circumstances of the Politburo's involvement at the time, difficult to recognize.

Absolving the Party from blame was one of the conclusions reached by Ceaușescu in his analysis of Drăghici's crimes. In answer to his rhetorical question as to how such things could occur, Ceaușescu dismissed their cause as being 'the general climate of suspicion and mistrust' and 'the trials and sentences during those year in a number of socialist countries'. Romanian conditions had produced these crimes, specifically both the 'harsh factional struggle' throughout the RCP's history, of which Pătrășcanu was but one victim, and the 'personal traits of character of Dej and Drăghici'. These crimes were not, Ceaușescu explained, a by-product of Socialism but sprang from 'the concepts of the bourgeoisie... from the retrograde mentality of those who committed these abuses'.³² Therefore, individuals and not the Party were to blame.

On the contrary, the Party's very strength and prestige was enhanced 'precisely because it is capable of analysing its own activity critically and self-critically'. A repetition of these crimes could only be avoided, Ceaușescu maintained, if four conditions were met. First, the leading role of the Party must be strengthened and the Party exercise permanent control over the activity of the security services and the judiciary. Secondly, the Central Committee's role in the Party should be advanced. Thirdly, 'the principal of collective work' in the Party must be applied: 'all the decisions must be the product of a broad, principled and

³¹ N. Ceaușescu, vol. 3, p. 180.

³² *Ibid.* p. 181.

thorough debate in the Party bodies'. Finally, 'Socialist democracy' had to be developed:

...there can be no Socialist democracy, one cannot speak of legality if the laws are disregarded and transgressed...No one must be allowed to violate these laws...[and] we must ensure that never again should any citizen of this country, whether minister, Party official or just an ordinary working man, fear that on going to his work place, he may not return home – as had occurred during the period we refer to and which we have fortunately left behind long since.³³

Drăghici's record continued to be the subject of scrutiny after the April plenum by the Party Commission on past abuses against members, and at one stage there seems to have been an intention to bring him to trial. This can be inferred from the speech of Ion Gheorghe Maurer before the Politburo on 19 September 1968, when he posed the question: 'What would a trial mean?' Drăghici in his defence, he argued, would reveal a whole series of shameful deeds committed by the Party leadership at that time. The trial would assume the character not only of condemnation of the leadership but also of the State itself. The trial could therefore not be held in public, yet if it was held in secret, the Party would be accused of hiding the whole truth. The best thing, in Maurer's view, was to let the fifteen-year statute of limitations, which was fast approaching, overtake the matter and therefore not put Drăghici on trial.³⁴ Ceaușescu accepted Maurer's reservations and had good reason to do so, in view of the hint of blackmail contained in a reply made by Drăghici to the Party commission on 30 October 1968: 'You wanted to expel me from the Party; well then, expel me, but then you should expel those who carried out repressions in the district of Focșani, because there people and children were shot.' Drăghici was evidently referring to Ceaușescu.³⁵

Ceaușescu's denunciation of past *Securitate* abuses and the reforms of 1965-8 created an atmosphere of optimism and an expectation of even broader liberalisation, especially after his defiance of the

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 171, 183-4.

³⁴ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 7 May 1993, p. 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Soviet Union at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia. That defiance seems all the more remarkable if one is to believe claims from Romanian military intelligence, the *Direcția de Informații a Marelui Stat Major* (DIMSM), that at the meeting of Warsaw Pact heads of state in the Crimea in July 1968, to which Ceaușescu and Dubček were not invited, a decision was taken to invade Romania as well as Czechoslovakia on 22 August.³⁶ After the August crisis, the DIMSM developed links with Western military intelligence agencies, a special priority being accorded to the military capability and movements of the armies of Romania's neighbours. At the same time, the numbers of DIMSM officers working under diplomatic cover in Romanian embassies was increased in order to compensate for the effects of the boycott on exchanges of information with Romania imposed within the Warsaw Pact due to Ceaușescu's stance over the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

How seriously the threat of a Warsaw Pact invasion was taken by Ceaușescu can be gauged from two decisions: his announcement on 21 August 1968, the day of the invasion, of the setting up of the Patriotic Guards, a worker's militia in which the majority of adult men and women were mobilised; and his secret order given at the same time that an escape plan for him be drawn up by the Council of State Security (CSS). Work on the plan started immediately in Directorate XI (Technical Directorate) of the CSS and was completed in 1970. The main thrust of the plan, code-named *Rovine-IS-70*, was that in the event of an invasion, the CSS should organise armed resistance on a nation-wide scale, involving the whole population. If this failed, then Ceaușescu would flee to a foreign country. Over the years, the plan was continually modified, in particular when Ceaușescu was told by the DIE (formerly the DGIE) of the Soviet plot, code-named *Dnestr*, to replace him with a leader more sympathetic to Moscow, (discussed below). In its updated form, it was given the name 'plan Z' by the Romanian press, which published details of the 1987 version of it in the summer of 1993 – the 1989 version was said to be in the hands of the SRI (*Serviciul Român de Informații* – as the security service became in 1990). Hand-written

³⁶ Maj. Gen. P. Șarpe, 'Considerații cu privire la evoluția organului militar român de informații de-a lungul vremii. Direcția Cercetare-Locul și rolul său în structura actuală a armatei române', *133 Ani de Existență a Serviciului Militar Român de Informații 1859-1992*, Bucharest, 1992, p. 9.

in order to ensure maximum security, *Rovine-IS-70* was 'to be carried out if, following an act of aggression against our state, there exists the imminent threat of temporary occupation of the capital and part of our country, a fact which would make more difficult and even impossible the conduct of armed resistance by the entire population from the present headquarters...[The plan consisted] mainly in the clandestine and protected removal from the capital of the senior Party leadership, and their passage along previously established routes.'³⁷

The Party leader's escape was to be effected by using the underground sewage and drainage tunnels which linked public buildings and residences with secret exit points. Safe houses were to be prepared for the temporary stay of the leader in case the escape routes were blocked. Protection of the leader was to be provided by the army, the DSS, the militia and by the Patriotic Guards. Landing sites for helicopters and planes carrying the Party leader were to be designated and places of refuge chosen in wooded mountain areas so that access by an enemy would be difficult and protracted defence easier. The plan specified that preference should be given in choosing hideouts in 'localities which have a particular historical connotation, where the population would be driven by powerful patriotic sentiments to provide shelter and protection to the leaders of the Party.'³⁸ This latter stipulation said much about Ceaușescu's psychology and his belief that he had inherited the mantle of the country's defenders and national leaders. The very choice of *Rovine* as the name for the plan is eloquent in this sense, being the spot in Wallachia where Prince Mircea the Old halted the advance of the Ottoman army under Sultan Bayazid in 1394.

Co-ordination of *Rovine-IS-70* was entrusted to the Council for State Security with regards to protection and radio communication, the Ministry of the Armed Forces for provision of ground, anti-aircraft and anti-missile defence, the Ministry of the Interior for traffic control on the ground, and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications to ensure the maintenance of radio and TV links. The escape was planned in two stages: the first from Bucharest itself, the second from the capital to a country area for which

³⁷ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 7 July 1993, p. 3.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

five different itineraries were prepared. For flight in an emergency from Bucharest, four sites were selected within the capital, to which the Ceașescu's could make their way either from the Party headquarters or from their residence by means of underground drainage tunnels. An elaborate diagram of the network of those tunnels which 'could be used for clandestine escape' to the four sites was appended to the plan.³⁹ Each of these four possible routes to the outskirts of Bucharest was given a code-name: *Luceafărul* for route 1, *Venus* for route 2, *Saturn* for route 3, and *Soarele* for route 4. Provision was also made for a decoy column of cars to take a false route.

For each stage of the journey, charts were drawn up showing the responsibilities of each CSS and army officer assigned to the escape plan, the number of cars and helicopters needed and the frequencies and wave-lengths to be used for communication. Thus for *Luceafărul* (route 1), the CSS officer placed in charge in 1970 was Lieut. Col. Ion Vasilică and twenty-five CSS officers were designated as the Party leader's bodyguard. Six cars and two helicopters were allocated for Ceașescu and other senior figures, with fifteen cars and five helicopters for his bodyguard. The provision for both helicopters and cars was made to cover the eventuality of departure by either means; in the event of escape by air, the helicopters were to take off from Piața Gheorghiu-Dej, the square in front of the Central Committee building.

The significance of these escape plans with regard to the events of the morning of 22 December 1989 is obvious. The withdrawal of the armoured cars from the front of the Central Committee building at 10.30 that morning effectively scuppered any chance of the helicopters taking off from the ground there; nevertheless the Ceașescus were saved by Lieut. Gen. Victor Stănculescu's decision to call in two helicopters to land on the roof of the Central Committee building. Only one was able to do so, the second being prevented by the aerals on the building. The summoning of two helicopters, coupled with the fact that the Ceașescus fled in the direction of Tîrgoviste, pointed to the implementation of the escape plan along route 4.⁴⁰

³⁹ The diagram was reproduced in *Evenimentul Zilei*, 10 July 1993, p. 3.

⁴⁰ M. Cărea, 'Planul 'Z' a Funcționar Pînă la Deciderea Judecării Cuplului', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 9 July 1993, p. 3.

In 1976, the escape plan *Rovine-IS-70* was modified to take into account the possibility of an attempt within the country to overthrow Ceaușescu. At the beginning of this year, the DIE allegedly learned of the existence of the Soviet plan *Dnestr* to replace Ceaușescu with a senior member of the Romanian Communist Party faithful to Moscow.⁴¹ If that was the case, the KGB managed to keep *Dnestr* a secret for almost seven years, for the defector Ion Mihai Pacepa asserted that the operation had been set in motion in August 1969 on Brezhnev's orders after President Nixon's visit to Romania that month.⁴² Yet judging from the documents available, the changes introduced into the plan only involved the addition of itineraries for escape from Ceaușescu's holiday resorts at Snagov, Predeal, Neptun and Sinaia for which provision had not been made in *Rovine-IS-70*, and the reconnoitering of new routes in the area of Olănești and Horezu; there was nothing in them to suggest a strategy for protection of Ceaușescu different from that in the original plan. With the incorporation of these changes, *Rovine-IS-70* was rechristened *Luceafărul* after the code-name for escape route 1.⁴³

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Pacepa, *Mostenirea Kremlinului*, p. 302.

⁴³ Appended to *Luceafărul* were the names of those officers and their units involved in drawing up *Rovine-IS-70*, together with the names of those put forward by the Minister of the Interior to work on *Luceafărul*. In the former category were Maj. Gen. Nicolae Plesită, Deputy Minister of the Interior Maj. Gen. Paul Marinescu and Cols Constantin Constantinescu, Vasile Ivascu, and Constantin Piciorus from the Directorate of Organisation and Mobilisation of the same Ministry, Maj. Gen. Mircea Oprescu, deputy head of Foreign Intelligence (DIE), Col. Iuliu Plăpcianu, from special unit 'R' (radio) of the Council for State Security, Col. Marin Dumitru from special unit 'F' (surveillance) of the CSS, Col. Ion Staicu and Lieut. Col. Alexandru Aliman of the Fifth Directorate (Security and Protection of the Party leadership) of the CSS, and Lieut. Col. Ștefan Prisecaru of the Third Directorate (Counter-espionage) of the CSS. Delegated to work on the whole of *Luceafărul* were Maj. Gen. Paul Marinescu and Cols Mircea Marmandiu and Constantin Piciorus of the DOM, and Lieut. Col. Mihai Bucuci of the Fifth Directorate. Radio links were assigned to Cols Iuliu Plăpcianu and Mihai Scatula from special unit 'R', while protection and defence along the routes was the responsibility of Col. Dumitru Penciu of the Command of the Ministry of the Interior Troops. Lieut. Gen. Vasile Milea, the head of the General Staff of the Patriotic Guards and a future Minister of Defence, was given the task of assisting defence of the place of refuge chosen for Ceaușescu, and Maj. Gen. Ioan Geoană had responsibility for providing anti-aircraft defence. *Evenimentul Zilei*, 12 July 1993, p. 3.

Security considerations led to the regular updating of *Luceafărul*. In April 1979, senior officers from the Directorate of Organisation and Mobilisation (DOM) of the Ministry of the Interior and from the Fifth Directorate of the CSS recommended that *Luceafărul* be revised, since 'the contents of the plan were known to some persons who no longer worked in the Ministry of the Interior' (perhaps a reference to the defector Pacepa). It was proposed that the plan should include security arrangements for the 'presidential family' as well as the President and that the documents referring to the plan drawn up between 1971 and 1976 be transferred from the DOM to the Fifth Directorate. This proposal, put forward by Col. Florică Stoicescu on behalf of the DOM and Col. Ion Băjenaru for the head of the Fifth Directorate, was approved by Ion Homostean, the Minister of the Interior.⁴⁴

Romania's 'unreliability' as an ally after August 1968 led Brezhnev to order the targetting of the country by the GRU. While Ceaușescu acted to keep his security forces content, granting employees of the Ministry of the Interior a 15 per cent pay rise in October 1969, he was acutely aware of the fact that all the senior commanders in the Romanian army had been trained in Moscow made them vulnerable to approaches from the GRU. The allegation made by the Czech defector Jan Sejna that, shortly after becoming Party Secretary, 'Ceaușescu ordered all Romanian officers with Soviet wives either to divorce them and send them back to the USSR or to resign from the army'⁴⁵ may well be true but if so, it was an order that was not fully obeyed, for Gen. Ion Ioniță, who was appointed Minister of Defence in 1966, was reputedly married to a Russian. The best known example of GRU attempts to glean information about Romania's defence plans was the case of Lieutenant General Ioan Șerb, head of the Bucharest garrison. Born in 1926 in southern Romania, he trained as an apprentice locksmith before volunteering as an infantryman in October 1944 to fight with the army in the Hungarian and Czechoslovak campaigns. In 1945, he was sent to an officer training school and rose to the rank of major. In 1950 he was selected to attend the Frunze military academy in Moscow, and at the

⁴⁴ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 13 July 1993, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Jan Sejna, *We Will Bury You*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1982, p. 67.

age of twenty-nine became the youngest general in the Romanian army.

Șerb was alleged to have passed documents in a Bucharest restaurant about the city's defences to the Soviet military attaché, Col. F.A. Musatov, in September 1971.⁴⁶ In an interview published in 1993, Șerb claimed that no proof of his alleged treachery had ever been produced. He recounted how he was demoted on 30 September 1971 by a decree of the State Council from the rank of Lieutenant General to that of Private and that he was arrested on 5 October while visiting his son at the officer school in Sibiu. On the same night, he was taken to Bucharest to the headquarters of the penal investigation directorate of the Committee of State Security on Calea Rahovei. There he was held for three months but his interrogators were unable to furnish any proof of his treachery.⁴⁷ He was, nevertheless, court-martialled in secret and sentenced to seven years imprisonment but was later released in August 1976 and sent to work on a collective farm after Ceaușescu met Brezhnev in the Crimea.

The Western media carried reports in February 1972 that Șerb had been executed, a result, Pacepa claims, of a deliberate ploy by Ceaușescu to convince the West that he regarded the Soviet Union as an unfriendly state. Such a message also served to send a powerful signal to Ceaușescu's generals that he would not tolerate disloyalty and provided a pretext for replacing those he distrusted. It was only with the publication of *Red Horizons* that another alleged case of betrayal by a Romanian general came to light.

Col. Gen. Nicolae Militaru, commander of the Bucharest military district till 1978, was one of a number of senior generals, who, having studied in Moscow, were being shadowed by the DSS's Fourth Directorate for Military Counter-espionage. It is alleged by Ion Pacepa that Brezhnev had given orders to the KGB and the GRU to draw up a contingency plan for the removal of Ceaușescu should his autonomous policies be deemed a threat to Soviet security. The plan for such a *putsch* was code-named *Dnestr* and, according to Pacepa, was set in motion in August 1969 after Ceaușescu had sent his invitation to President Nixon to visit Bucharest. It involved the establishment of links with

⁴⁶ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 195.

⁴⁷ Generalul Ioan Șerb nu a fost executat', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 3 March 1993, p. 3.

leading figures in the Party, army and the DSS who had studied in the Soviet Union, had, in some cases, Russian wives and who, at a given signal from Moscow, were to arrest Ceașescu, to create a Front for National Salvation and to take over the reins of power. Militaru was one such figure. Pacepa claims that a special counter-intelligence unit within the DIE was set up to protect Ceașescu against a Soviet coup and that it received the designation UM 0920/A, 0920 being the code for the DIE, according to Pacepa.⁴⁸

Before continuing, two notes of caution need to be introduced. First, Pacepa's use of the term 'Front for National Salvation' smacks too much of an attempt to compromise the more recent Front for National Salvation, set up after the 1989 revolution, by suggesting that the seeds of it had been sown some twenty years earlier by Moscow. It is difficult to believe that such a name could have been chosen so many years earlier. Secondly, other sources argue that the designation UM 0920 was used to denote a specialist unit charged with gathering technological intelligence with both civil and military applications. Its head in 1978, at the time of Pacepa's defection, was Maj. Gen. Teodor Sirbu.⁴⁹ In his earlier book *Red Horizons*, Pacepa himself refers to this same unit as 'Brigade SD'.⁵⁰ DSS documents from 1989 do reveal the existence of a separate counter-espionage unit within the CIE (*Central de Informații Externe* – foreign intelligence service) directed against the activities of Soviet agents on Romanian soil; it carried the designation at that date of UM 0110 while the code for the DIE/CIE was UM 0544. An explanation for these discrepancies might be that the designations given to CIE units would have been altered after Pacepa's defection.

Returning to Militaru, he was allegedly filmed meeting the Soviet military attaché in Bucharest in Bucharest in 1978 who requested a copy of the General Staff telephone book. Militaru apparently agreed and his contact was therefore reported to Ceașescu, who ordered his removal. However, Ceașescu's displeasure was not so great as to deter him from making Militaru a Deputy Minister for Industrial Construction. Militaru's downward

⁴⁸ Pacepa, *Mostenirea Kremlinului*, pp. 299–300.

⁴⁹ P.M. Băcanu, 'Moartea unui general', *România liberă*, 20 July 1990.

⁵⁰ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 392.

spiral nevertheless continued. He was replaced as Deputy Minister in February 1984 and nine months later, at the thirteen RCP Congress, he lost his seat on the Central Committee, where he had been an alternate member since August 1969.⁵¹

Pacepa claims that, by the time of his defection in July 1978, six other generals in the army or DSS, apart from Militaru, had been identified as being involved in the Soviet plan *Dnestr*. The only one named by him is Maj. Gen. Grigore Naum, whom he identifies as head of the Fifth Directorate for Military Counter-espionage.⁵² In fact, the Fifth Directorate was responsible for Ceaușescu's personal protection. Naum was placed in reserve and, like the other officers allegedly implicated in the Soviet plot, was spared any public humiliation. In order to avoid irritating the Kremlin, Ceaușescu, apparently forbade even their interrogation, preferring to neutralise them quietly by moving them to insignificant posts. Such was the treatment of Maj. Gen. Mihai Caraman, who in 1962 recruited a Frenchman librarian at NATO headquarters to provide him with hundreds of secret documents, and rose to head the counter-intelligence unit of the DIE. He was also allegedly 'reactivated' by the GRU in 1978. Pacepa did not include him amongst those implicated in the Soviet plot but talked simply of his renewed contacts with the GRU, proof of which was presented to Ceaușescu in Pacepa's presence by the head of the Third Directorate of Counter-espionage of the DSS, Maj. Gen. Gheorghe Moga. Caraman was said to have been quietly demoted to a position in the Bucharest DSS inspectorate.⁵³ However, another source suggested that Pacepa's flight was prompted by this very same Caraman. Working on information supplied by the KGB and GRU, Caraman, who is described as head of the special investigative and surveillance unit 'F' of the DSS, was apparently close to identifying Pacepa as the source of intelligence leaked to the CIA. Caraman's progress was reported to Pacepa and he decided to defect.⁵⁴

⁵¹ M. Shafir, 'The New Romanian Government', *Radio Free Europe* (hereafter RFE) *Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 2 (12 January 1990), p. 36.

⁵² Pacepa, *Mostenirea Kremlinului*, p. 303.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 492.

⁵⁴ P.M. Băcanu, 'Moartea unui general', *România liberă*, 20 July 1990.

Information about the activity of another senior Romanian officer on behalf of the GRU and KGB during this period surfaced in 1993. A report in the weekly *Tinerama* alleged that 'a high-ranking officer who holds one of the most senior positions in Romania's defence establishment had been a Soviet spy for decades'. The officer in question had started his career in the 1960s in the DIMSM and was given a diplomatic posting in Belgrade. At the beginning of the 1970s, he was posted to Paris where he worked for almost a decade. After two or three years there, he attracted the attention of the Romanian counter-espionage service not because of his contacts with the Soviet military attaché, which were to be expected, but due to his frequent meetings with undercover agents from the Soviet Embassy which took place at the Paris Consulate and in Marseilles. In 1976, he was reported to have had a 'confidential' meeting with Vladimir Rybcenko, and four meetings with Anatoly Beliatsev two years later, and to have been seen talking to Boris Filipov, Evgheny Ivanov and Mihail Soloviev – all these were KGB agents. The latter was expelled in 1983 by the French authorities together with forty-six other KGB and GRU officers for 'activities incompatible with his diplomatic status'.

In 1979, after it had been established that the Soviet contacts of the Romanian officer belonged to Directorate T of the First Chief Directorate (Foreign Intelligence) of the KGB responsible for scientific and technological espionage, the Romanian officer was recalled to Bucharest but treated with the same tolerance as Militaru, being given a post first in the military academy and then one in the port of Brăila. The article claimed he then joined the conspiracy hatched by Militaru to oust Ceauşescu. After the dictator's flight on 22 December 1989, the officer is said to have turned up at the army divisional HQ in Brăila, claiming to be the new Chief of the General Staff. He then ordered the arrest of the commandant, Col. Rizea, appointing a Col. Şora in his place. He ordered Şora to make contact with the Soviet military command in Reni, on the opposite bank of the Danube, and 'to facilitate the entry of Soviet troops into Romania in support of the revolution'. When Şora tried to give these orders, he was arrested by subordinate officers and confusion reigned until the self-proclaimed Chief of the General Staff was ordered to

Bucharest by Militaru on 26 December and appointed head of 'one of Romania's secret services'. When Militaru was relieved of his office as Minister of Defence in February 1990, the officer was appointed by President Iliescu to a post which involved the co-ordination of the work of all the Romanian secret services. The weekly did not name the officer but called for his resignation or for his dismissal.⁵⁵ Several weeks later it was reported that 'well-informed sources at Cotroceni [the Presidential Palace] anticipate with certainty the imminent removal from office and placing in the reserve of Major General Nicolae Pancea, Secretary General of the Supreme Defence Council...The removal of the important general is due, according to the same sources in the presidential circle, to revelations in the press from which it would seem to be the case that this person might have worked for a foreign power while he held a diplomatic post.'⁵⁶

Any hopes that the denunciation of past *Securitate* abuses and the defiance of the Soviet Union over the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Ceaușescu might lead to even broader liberalisation proved misplaced. The machinery of terror, set up in 1948, remained in place. Disillusion gave way to dissent and the *Securitate* was quick to act. Despite amnesties in 1976 and 1977 freeing 28,000 people (mainly juvenile offenders or people arrested or sentenced for leaving or attempting to leave the country illegally), serious human rights violations continued. Dissenters were subjected to surveillance, harassment, intimidation and loss of jobs; or they were arrested without such preliminaries and tried, often on what Amnesty International believed to be trumped-up charges of offences such as 'parasitism' (i.e. unemployment), 'homosexual relations' and 'embezzlement', and either sent to prison, psychiatric institutions or to forced labour camps.⁵⁷

It is not generally appreciated that psychiatric abuse was effectively institutionalised in 1965 under the provisions of Decree Law 12, 'On the Medical Treatment of Dangerously Mentally Ill Persons'. Evidence gathered by Amnesty International showed that this law was used to obtain the commitment of political

⁵⁵ 'Un Spion la Cotroceni', *Tinerama*, no. 125 (23-29 April 1993).

⁵⁶ *Cotidianul*, 1 June 1993.

⁵⁷ *Romania*, London: Amnesty International, 1980, p. 3.

dissidents to psychiatric institutions, initially for a period of a few months, but from the beginning of the 1970s for periods lasting up to five years. In the early 1970s, special psychiatric hospitals, such as Poiana Mare in the county of Dolj and Dr Petru Groza, in Bihor, were created and a number of prisoners of conscience were sent there on the basis of Article 114 of the 1968 Criminal Code. This article provided for the psychiatric treatment of criminal offenders who were 'mentally ill and a danger to society'; according to Amnesty's evidence, the number of dissidents confined in these institutions increased significantly after their establishment.⁵⁸

Under Decree Law 12, the decision to commit a person to a psychiatric institution was made by the State Prosecutor or health authorities and any extension of the period of confinement was to be made by a court. In the cases known to Amnesty International, dissidents had been sent to psychiatric institutions without any previous record of violent behaviour and, in many cases, without any psychiatric diagnosis or examination having taken place prior to arrest. The decision to release a person from compulsory psychiatric confinement was to be based on a psychiatrist's report at the institution where the subject was held but the recommendations made to the courts were made on political and not medical criteria.

The dissidents sent to psychiatric institutions under Article 114 of the 1968 Criminal Code were charged with non-violent political offences such as 'anti-state propaganda' and 'attempting to leave the country illegally'. Both offences were defined in Articles 166 and 245 of the same code. Article 166 stated:

Propaganda of a Fascist nature and propaganda against the socialist state, committed by any means in public, is punished by a sentence of imprisonment from 5 to 15 years and the forfeiture of certain rights. Propaganda or the undertaking of any action, with the aim of changing the Socialist system or activities which could result in a threat to the security of the state will be punished by a sentence of imprisonment from 5 to 15 years and the forfeiture of certain rights.

⁵⁸ *Romania: Forced Labour, Psychiatric Repression of Dissent, Persecution of Religious Believers, Ethnic Discrimination and Persecution, Law and the Suppression of Human Rights in Romania*, New York: Amnesty International USA, 1978, p. 13.

Article 245 read:

Entering or leaving the country through illegal crossing of the frontier will be punished by a sentence of imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years. The acquisition of means or instruments or the undertaking of measures from which it unequivocally follows that the offender intends to cross the frontier illegally will also be regarded as an attempt.

'Illegal crossing' meant without possession of a passport. Since the issue of a passport was, in many cases, dependent upon fulfilling certain 'security' criteria, such as collaboration with the DIE, fidelity to their principles vitiated the dissidents' chances of ever satisfying the criteria. Romanian courts ordered the commitment of many mentally healthy persons found guilty under the aforementioned articles to psychiatric institutions on the basis of false diagnoses.⁵⁹

Three types of institutions were used for confinement. Many of those ruled to be 'mentally ill' under Decree 12 were sent to ordinary psychiatric hospitals as in-patients and kept in 'high-security wards' for between one and two months. Others, charged with criminal offences and subjected to psychiatric diagnosis, were held for seven to eight weeks, pending trial, in the psychiatric wards of prison hospitals such as Jilava, some 12 km. south of Bucharest. Dissidents who were found guilty of 'anti-state propaganda' and determined to be mentally ill were committed to special psychiatric hospitals for the criminally insane. Detention here lasted from two to three years.

Many dissidents subjected to psychiatric abuse were sent to the Dr Petru Groza Hospital in the town of the same name in the county of Bihor. Between 1973 and 1977, the number of dissidents held here rose from 50 to 150. Men and women were housed in separate buildings in a complex surrounded by a six-foot-high metallic fence topped with barbed-wire. Around the fence were neon lights and inside it four watch-towers manned by armed policemen. Patrols of the fence were carried out at regular intervals with German Shepherd dogs. The death rate in the hospital in the 1970s was reported to be relatively high. In January and February 1975, six persons (one woman and five men) died from heart attack, tuberculosis, progressive paralysis

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

(syphilis) or jaundice and all were said to be under the age of thirty.⁶⁰ Dissidents formerly held in the hospital claimed that there were several causes of deaths: high doses of drugs administered to persons suffering from serious somatic and psychic diseases; poor levels of hygiene; and inadequate medical treatment.

Of the 400 prisoners confined between 1975 and 1977, Amnesty International concluded that 150 were dissidents and the remainder common criminals. Most of the dissidents were subjected to psychiatric treatment on a court order based on the aforementioned Article 114. There were only a handful of psychiatrists working in the hospital and approximately thirty auxiliary medical staff, including twenty-five male and female nurses, and a laboratory technician. The hospital director was Dr Ioan Pricop, with Dr Mircea Tocușiu in charge of the women's section and Dr Horia Ardelean responsible for the men. The wards were said to be poorly equipped, blankets were not washed for months and sheets were changed irregularly. Meals were served regularly three times a day but dissidents alleged that they were often laced with drugs.

A second hospital to which dissidents were committed was the Poiana Mare Psychiatric Hospital in the county of Dolj, about 14 km. south of the town of Calafat. The buildings were originally built as army barracks in the early 1950s but later a tuberculosis sanatorium was set up here; in 1972, the Ministry of Internal Affairs transformed some of the other buildings into a special psychiatric hospital. The hospital was divided into four pavilions or centres, two each for men and women, with a four-metre high perimeter fence around each. Each pavilion contained several rooms where inmates were held, up to twenty-five to a room, together with a dining room and a treatment room for the administration of drugs. Despite a Ministry of Health recommendation in 1973 that the hospital be closed for not meeting standards of hygiene or medical care, the Ministry of Internal Affairs took no action. All the hospital personnel were employees of the latter ministry, including the political director who, in 1978, was Dr Enache.⁶¹

Each ward or pavilion had eight nurses, four guards and three janitors. The number of inmates in 1977 was reported to be

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

400, evenly distributed among the four wards and equally divided amongst men and women. Of them, some 120 were estimated to be dissidents. The right to outside exercise was given only to those detainees who had been subjected to heavy dosages of drugs and had been adjudged to respond the process of 're-education' by behaving in a friendly manner towards the staff.

Both the Poiana Mare and Dr Petru Groza hospitals were used for the long-term treatment of prisoners, while the Jilava prison hospital had a rapid turnover of short-term detainees. This latter hospital was part of one of the country's maximum security prisons, built as an underground fortress in 1895 to defend Bucharest. Water dripped from the ceilings and the damp walls of the cells; hence arose the name 'Jilava', which literally means 'the damp place'. A description of it in the 1950s is given by Annie Samuelli, who spent part of her twelve-year sentence there:

The prison had once been an underground fort. The roof was covered with meadows on which cattle and sheep grazed. Nobody could guess from the road that ran alongside it that underneath, about four thousand political prisoners were held either for trial or for transfer. The cells had vaulted ceilings, stone floors, shuttered windows looking out onto deeply dug yards enclosed by high earth cliffs. Shrubs, trees and grass plots gave them the aspect of ordinary gardens in order to bluff any aeroplane flying overhead.

Water dripped down the walls, especially during the hot airless summers and nothing, not even shoes, could be left for long on the floor without getting mouldy. The place richly deserved its nickname.⁶²

The prison hospital was built overground and its fourth floor housed the psychiatric section. According to dissidents confined there in the 1970s, the smallest rooms of the section were less than 4 square metres and used for the punishment of inmates, who were sometimes kept there in straitjackets for varying periods of time, in extreme cases up to ten days. Political prisoners were quartered in rooms with common criminals, the largest rooms being approximately 30 metres square and accommodating up to twenty-six patients. The psychiatric section held 100 or more

⁶² Samuelli, *The Wall Between*, pp. 45-6.

inmates at any one time and these included political and criminal prisoners with serious mental illnesses. Some, however, were dissidents who did not suffer from psychiatric disorders.⁶³

It was in Jilava that a clear pattern of abuse involving the injection of powerful neuroleptic drugs could be established from the testimony of former prisoners of conscience. Doses were given without any medical examination being carried out on the new patient. Therefore patients with certain medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease were susceptible to drastic side effects from the administration of such drugs. After two weeks, an electroencephalogram was taken and a twenty-minute interview conducted with a doctor. Dissidents who took part in such interviews were then transferred to special psychiatric hospitals but, before being sent on, were asked to sign a statement that no drugs had been administered to them. Particularly stubborn prisoners, both political and criminal, were transferred to the hospital in Sighetul Marmăției in the county of Maramureș.

Yet another psychiatric hospital to which dissidents were confined was the Dr Marinescu hospital in Bucharest. They were placed in wards 6 and 7, which housed the incurably ill who often walked around naked. The supervision of dissidents was entrusted to a medical assistant (alleged to be an officer in the *Securitate*) who administered a daily dose of drugs by injection. Prisoners were usually sent to this hospital by the court for 'observation' and were held for four to eight weeks. Between 1975 and 1978, there were believed to be no more than five dissidents held in the hospital at any one time.

Former dissidents reported to Amnesty International that psychiatric treatment was used as a means of political re-education throughout the 1970s and 1980s of those sentenced under Article 114 of the Criminal Code. A psychiatrist was often present at the interrogation carried out by officers from the Directorate of Penal Investigation of the *Securitate*. The political offender was asked to describe his attitudes towards Communism, towards the country's leaders and towards Communism, towards the country's leaders and towards society at large; on the basis of his responses, a diagnosis was made. The diagnosis was often fabricated by drawing on the prisoner's medical record or on his or her complaints

⁶³ *Romania: Forced Labour*, p. 18.

about headaches or allergies. If the offender was certified by the court as insane, he or she was committed to a psychiatric hospital and the process of re-education was set in motion. Threats, injections and sometimes beatings were given if the prisoner refused to admit his or her guilt and recant. Admittance of guilt led to the termination of drug treatment and even early release but the dissident was required to sign a statement promising not to reveal details of his or her treatment on pain of re-incarceration. Breaking the interdiction on conversation with fellow prisoners was punished with injections of drugs or by beatings. Contact with relatives was severely restricted. In Jilava hospital, inmates were allowed to receive and send one letter a month, while in the Dr Petru Groza and Poiana Mare hospitals, they were sometimes not allowed any contact for several months. In the period of 'forensic observation' at the 'Dr Marinescu' hospital, no contact was permitted.

Drugs and electric shocks were not used in hospitals alone. Several accounts by dissidents describe their administration during interrogation by penal investigation officers of the *Securitate* at their headquarters or Calea Rahovei in Bucharest in an effort to extract self-incriminating statements. Two workers from the *Steagul Rosu* tractor plant in Brasov, Gheorghe Rusu and Vasile Brancu, were arrested in 1974 after a fire was started at the plant and logans for improved wages appeared on the walls. Both were subjected to electric shock and drug treatment and charged with economic subversion and anti-state propaganda. Rusu was sentenced to death in a trial at the plant on 12 May 1975 but the sentence was not carried out and he was sent to Aiud prison. Brancu was rumoured to have died at Calea Rahovei following psychiatric abuse which included electric shock treatment.⁶⁴

The details of sixteen cases of dissidents confined to psychiatric hospitals for various periods between 1969 and 1978 were published by Amnesty International in 1978.⁶⁵ Three of them, Paulina Cătănescu, Gheorghe Brașoveanu and Vasile Paraschiv, expressed

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶⁵ Their names were Paulina Cătănescu, Ștefan Toia, Haralamb Ionescu, Ștefan Gavrilă, Vasile Paraschiv, Ștefan Tudor, Ilona Luca, Marian Neagu, Cezar Mititelu, Victor Murea, Julia Petrescu, Ion Dobre, Gheorghe Brașoveanu, Trusca (Christian name not known), Genevieve Sfătcu and Cornel Iliescu. *Romania: Forced Labour*, pp. 23-8.

their solidarity with an open letter addressed by the writer Paul Goma and seven others on 8 February 1977 to the thirty-five participating states at the Belgrade session of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which had signed the Helsinki Final Act. Goma drew attention to human rights abuses in Romania and the government's failure to respect its international undertakings in this domain. Cătănescu and Brașoveanu were re-arrested and placed in psychiatric hospitals while Paraschiv was given a passport at the end of 1977. He went to France where he underwent an independent psychiatric examination which confirmed that he was not mentally ill and then returned to Romania in the summer of 1978.

Brașoveanu was again confined to a psychiatric hospital in March 1979. Two months earlier, a group of fifteen workers and a number of intellectuals from the city of Turnu Severin in the southwest of Romania established a Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania (*Sindicatul Liberal Oamenilor Muncii din România* – SLOMR), which attracted a countrywide membership in town such as Ploiesti and Constanța and involved Hungarian workers in Tîrgu Mureș and Timișoara. The dissident Orthodox priest, Gheorghe Calciu, offered to be a spiritual adviser. The group circulated a manifesto calling for the legalisation of unofficial trade unions and observance of the right to free association. In an open letter to Ceaușescu in April, the union protested against the frequent arrests of its members, amongst them Ion Cană and Gheorghe Brașoveanu, who were arrested on 10 March, and Nicolae Dascălu, who succeeded them as chairman of the union and who was sentenced in June to eighteen months in prison for allegedly passing state secrets to Amnesty International. Another SLOMR member, Eugen Onescu, was committed to the 'Dr Marinescu' hospital for three weeks, while Cană and Brașoveanu were sent to jail but released in 1980. In 1986 the latter was allowed to leave Romania.

On 21 February 1989, Dr Ion Vianu, a practising psychiatrist then based in Switzerland after having left Romania in the 1970s, told a public hearing of the Political Affairs Committee of the European Parliament of the case of Nestor Popescu, a cinema scriptwriter. Popescu had become a Baptist in 1986 and in the following year had been dismissed from his job for disseminating Baptist literature. He was put on trial and declared to be suffering

from 'paranoiac psychosis', for which he was sent to the Poiana Mare Hospital where he remained.⁶⁶

Confinement in a psychiatric institution often followed the use of physical violence against a detainee. According to the exiled dissident writer Paul Goma, whose recurrent prison experiences allowed him to compare the *Securitate* methods of the 1950s with those of the 1970s, the grim 'blockheaded' interrogators with Slavonic accents had given way to articulate Romanians who rarely resorted to physical violence.⁶⁷ But this is not the experience of other political detainees of the period, notably Janos Torok, a textile worker from Cluj who was arrested in March 1975 and severely beaten by *Securitate* officers during interrogation, nor of Father Gheorghe Calciu, an Orthodox priest arrested in March 1979 for public criticism of Ceaușescu, for he was also beaten.

Throughout Ceaușescu's rule, the Ministry of the Interior and the Department of Security stayed intact although they underwent frequent reorganisation and, after Drăghici's dismissal, periodic changes of ministers. This was a reflection both of Ceaușescu's policy of rotation to prevent a potential rival establishing a power base or becoming known to the public eye and of criticism of the DSS's failings. The most sweeping staff changes followed Ion Pacepa's defection to the United States in the summer of 1978. On 19 April 1972, the Council of State Security was reintegrated into the Ministry of Internal Affairs which received the new official name of *Ministerul de Interne* in place of *Ministerul Afacerilor Interne* (Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Interior Ministry's designation since its creation in the late nineteenth century. The CSS was dissolved and its attributes passed to the Department of Security (*Departamentul Securității*) (DS) which functioned alongside the militia and prisons as a department of the Ministry of the Interior. At the same time, Cornel Onescu, who had taken over from Drăghici as Minister of the Interior in July 1965, was replaced by Ion Stănescu. Stănescu's zeal in advocating closer supervision by the DS of Party members earned him the enmity of Emil Bobu, secretary responsible for the cadres, who complained to Ceaușescu. The result was that when the security directorates and their auxiliary sections were regrouped in June 1973, Stănescu

⁶⁶ *European Parliament*, Info Memo 34 (21 February 1989), p. 8.

⁶⁷ Bacon, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

was removed and Teodor Coman was named Minister (see Annex 1 for details).

The desire to harness technological advances to defend state security was evident in the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 15 December 1969 to set up a factory under the control of the CSS to produce 'special equipment designed to combat actions against security'. On 14 July 1970, a computer centre for processing data for the Ministry of the Interior and the CSS was also established (Resolution of the Council of Ministers 987). Computer technology was also introduced to rationalize the processing of cipher traffic. In 1977, a National Centre for Enciphered Communications (*Centrul Național de Transmisiuni Cifrate*) was set up to handle all cipher traffic from Romanian embassies abroad, from the Military Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and from the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. The centre was subordinated to the DIE whose head was Col. Gen. Nicolae Doicaru and deputy head Lieut. Gen. Ion Mihai Pacepa.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ In his book *Red Horizons*, Pacepa writes that the DIE itself was reorganised in 1972 on orders from Ceaușescu and given the designation 'Brigade SD', the letters SD having no significance (p. 392). Other sources suggest that this is an over-simplification. The 'Brigade SD', with the code UM 0920, was a specialist unit charged with gathering technological intelligence with both civil and military applications and was headed by Maj. Gen. Teodor Sîrbu. The brigade worked in conjunction with the DIE whose officer strength, according to Pacepa, was more than doubled; almost 300 of them were assigned abroad, the principal targets being the major industrial nations of the West. Organised geographically and by category of industry, the brigade's activity was based on both Romanian and Soviet requests for intelligence with military, including nuclear, applications. Sîrbu's fate was bound up with Pacepa's. After the latter's defection in the summer of 1978, Sîrbu was arrested on suspicion of being himself a spy and then released and transferred to the Ministry of the Interior Academy at Băneasa outside Bucharest. He died in an explosion in a garage in a small town called Voila north of Bucharest on 20 July 1984 (P.M. Băcanu, 'Moartea unui general', *România liberă*, 20 July 1990).

ANNEX 1

THE ORGANISATION OF THE ROMANIAN SECURITY SERVICE, 1965-78

1. Under Decree no. 710 of 22 July 1967, direct supervision of the activity of the DS, including the DGIE, was transferred to a new body, the Council for State Security (*Consiliul Securității Statului* – CSS), which was to be part of the Ministry of the Interior. The CSS was composed of a president with the rank of Minister, a first vice-president, two vice-presidents and five people appointed by the Council of Ministers.

2. By a resolution (13 September 1967) of the Council of Ministers, the DS was reorganised as follows:

General Directorate of Domestic Intelligence (*Direcția Generală de Informații Interne*)

First Directorate (domestic intelligence)

Second Directorate (economic counter-espionage)

General Directorate of Counter-espionage (*Direcția Generală de Contraspionaj*)

Third Directorate (counter-espionage)

Fourth Directorate (military counter-espionage)

General Directorate of Foreign Intelligence (*Direcția Generală de Informații Externe*—DGIE)

General Technical and Supply Directorate (*Direcția Generală Tehnico-Operativă și de Inzestrare*)

Directorate VIII (protection of party leadership)

Directorate IX (surveillance)

Directorate X (penal investigation)

Directorate of Security for Bucharest

Chancellery of the CSS

Personnel

Training

Counsellors of the CSS

Service B (counter-espionage within the DS)

Service C (records)

Service D (disinformation of foreign intelligence agencies)
 Service E (cipher)
 Service G (delivery of secret documents)
 Command of the Security Troops
 Air Transport Section of the DS
 Regional Directorates of the DS
 Military Academies of the DS

3. On 3 April 1968, the CSS was given independent status. Its attributes were defined as 'the defence of state security against acts of sabotage, diversion, undermining of the national economy, as well as against actions undertaken by foreign espionage services, the organisation and implementation of military intelligence and counter-espionage and the protection of government and Party leaders'.

The activity of the DS was subsumed by the CSS and its structure remained unaltered except for the addition on 10 September 1971 of an Information and Documentation Centre and a Centre for Psychophysiological Research designed to 'improve' interrogation techniques.

4. On 19 April 1972, the CSS was reintegrated into the Ministry of the Interior, which received the new official name of *Ministerul de Interne* in place of *Ministerul Afacerilor Interne* (Ministry of Internal Affairs), the Interior Ministry's designation since its creation in the late nineteenth century. The DS was divided into the following directorates:

General Directorate of Domestic Intelligence

First Directorate (domestic intelligence)

Second Directorate (economic counter-espionage)

General Directorate of Counter-espionage

Third Directorate (counter-espionage)

Fourth Directorate (military counter-espionage)

General Technical and Operations Directorate

Fifth Directorate (installing surveillance devices)

Sixth Directorate (locating clandestine texts)

Directorate VII (special equipment and materials)

Directorate VIII (protection of party leadership)

Directorate IX (surveillance)

Directorate X (penal investigation)

Department of Foreign Intelligence (*Departamentul de Informații Externe*), formerly DGIE (UM 0626)

Centre for Information and Documentation

Service C (transport of secret documents)

Service D (disinformation)

5. Under Decree Number 362 (27 June 1973) of the State Council, the security directorates and their auxiliary sections were regrouped as:

Directorates

I (domestic intelligence)

II (economic counter-espionage)

III (counter-espionage)

IV (military counter-espionage)

V (protection of party leadership)

VI (penal investigation)

Technical and Transmission Command

Special Installation Unit

Planning and Design Unit

Unit for Uncovering Clandestine Writings

Special Radio Transmission and Counter-information Unit

Special Surveillance Unit F

Centre for Information and Documentation

Service C (transport of secret documents)

Service D (disinformation)

Department of Foreign Intelligence – DIE (UM 0920)

6. In 1977, a National Centre for Enciphered Communications (*Centrul Național de Transmisiuni Cifrate*) was set up to handle all cipher traffic from Romanian embassies abroad, from the Military Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Defence and from the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. It was subordinated to the DIE. (Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 382.)

ANNEX 2

HOSPITALS WHERE, ACCORDING TO REPORTS RECEIVED BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, NEUROLEPTIC DRUGS WERE ADMINISTERED TO DISSIDENTS, 1970-80

'Dr Gheorghe Marinescu' Hospital, Bucharest
Jilava Prison Hospital (psychiatric ward)
Poiana Mare Hospital, County of Dolj
'Dr Petru Groza' Hospital, County of Bihor
Voila Hospital in Cimpină, County of Prahova

PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS WHERE MALTREATMENT WAS REPORTED

Bălăceanca, near Bucharest
Gataia, County of Timiș
Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, County of Bacău
Hospital no. 3, Oradea (Strada Maria Rosetti)
Jebel, County of Timiș
Poroschia, County of Teleorman
Răducăneni, County of Iași
Săpoca, County of Buzău
Sighetu Marmației
Urlăți, County of Buzău
Zalău

Amnesty International, Political Abuses of Psychiatry in Romania, EUR 39/11/78, pp. 21-2. This same source provides a list a doctors who administered drugs or made diagnoses and recommended treatment of dissidents.

CEAUȘESCU'S APPEAL TO NATIONAL SENTIMENT: THE CASE OF TRANSYLVANIA

Nothing is guaranteed to charge Romanian and Hungarian emotions more violently than the subject of Transylvania and the situation of the Hungarian minority there. The experience of that minority under Ceaușescu has left a legacy of mistrust amongst both peoples which unscrupulous politicians on both sides have been eager to exploit. The province is regarded by both Romanians and Hungarians as an integral part of their ancestral homeland and in the minds of both peoples, their own survival as a nation is linked to the fate of Transylvania. For the Hungarians, Transylvania remains part of the homeland which was unjustly amputated at the Versailles Peace Conference (1919-20) after the First World War and they understandably show a concern for the fate of their 1.6 million minority in the province. Yet complaints about the treatment of the minority are, again understandably, equated by the Romanians with territorial ambitions on the part of Hungary to detach the province from Romania. It is this contiguity of Hungary, coupled with the size of the Hungarian minority, which made and continues to make the treatment of the Hungarian minority such a sensitive issue for both states and distinguished it from the problem of other minorities, such as that of the Germans.

When Transylvania was transferred from Hungarian to Romanian rule, its inhabitants, Romanian, Hungarian and German, had been promised some form of federal or devolved association with the new polity. This promise was ignored in favour of centralised rule from Bucharest. This ruled out a possible accommodation between the government and those of its citizens who now found themselves a minority.

In the Communist period integration or, as Ceașescu often termed it, 'homogenisation' was an extension of the strategy of consolidation of the newly-enlarged state pursued by Romanian governments in the inter-war period. The process had been accelerated by the drive for industrialisation undertaken by the Communist regime after 1948. It increased the urbanisation of the population as a whole and led to massive migrations of workers, usually from Romanian areas into those of Hungarian population.¹ Moreover, the emphasis in industrialisation on *equal* regional development and modernisation reflected the Romanian view about the relationship between individual and group rights, an understanding of which is also fundamental to an analysis of the Romanian perception of minorities.

After the Second World War, Soviet hegemony over both Hungary and Romania damped down jurisdictional conflict between the two. The Hungarian population (12 per cent of the total in 1945) received and exercised certain rights, mainly cultural. Additionally, two Hungarians, Vasile Luca and Alexandru Moghioros, were members of the Politburo.

The purge of Luca in 1952 was no more instigated by anti-Hungarian sentiment than that of Pauker was by anti-Semitic feeling. Equalisation, the professed driving force behind the Party's revolutionary reform programme, brought for the peoples of Romania, irrespective of their ethnic identity, an equality in suffering. Just as Hungarians joined the Romanian Communist Party in 1945 in large numbers and provided their share of officers for the security police, so many were victims of the new regime. But the Hungarians' contribution to the forces of coercion was not disproportionate to the size of their community. An examination of the ethnic background of senior officers in the *Securitate* in 1948 shows that of a total of sixty, only three were Hungarian. This figure hardly supports the claim made in the extreme nationalist weekly, *România Mare*, on 25 October 1991 that Hungarians, together with Russian-speaking Jews, provided a large proportion of the *Securitate's* staff. If the total number of staff listed in the

¹ The reverse also occurred, as in the case of the building of the Casa Republicii in Bucharest, when thousands of Hungarian construction workers were brought from Transylvania, but these were, in effect, migrant workers who received no right of residence in the capital.

records of the time is considered, only 247 of the 3,973 personnel recorded were Hungarians and most of these were employed in those regional directorates which covered the major concentrations of Hungarian population, such as Brașov, Cluj, Oradea, Sibiu and Timișoara.

As victims of Communist oppression, Hungarians were affected by the persecution of the Roman Catholic Church which had in 1948 1.3 million faithful, most of whom were Hungarians and Germans. More than 700,000 Hungarians belonged to the Reformed or Calvinist Church and 70,000 to the Unitarian Church. Control by the Communist government of the Roman Catholic Church met with great resistance from the priests and their congregations.

The first indication from the Romanian regime that special recognition might be given to the Hungarian minority was the announcement in the Constitution of 1952, published on 18 July, of the formation of a Hungarian Autonomous Region (*Regiunea Autonomă Maghiară*).² The regional capital was located in the city of Tirgu Mureș. There was no doubt about the region's Hungarian character, for, according to the census of 21 February 1956, it had a population of 731,361, of whom 567,509 were Hungarians and 145,718 Romanians. But the fact that it embraced only a third of the Hungarians living in Romania gave rise to accusations that its boundaries were drawn to make the area 'as small as possible' and 'as far as possible from the Hungarian border'.³ A counter-argument could be that none of the other areas of Transylvania with a large Hungarian population was predominantly Hungarian. On ethnic criteria, another autonomous region for Hungarians could have been set up along the Hungarian border.⁴ Yet this would have posed security problems for Romania and invited Hungarian claims for territorial adjustment in her favour. Establishing the Hungarian Autonomous Region in eastern Transylvania posed no such security problems, since it was far from the border and enclosed by areas with a majority Romanian population.

² R. King, *Minorities under Communism. Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973, p. 149.

³ E. Illyes, *National Minorities in Romania: Change in Transylvania*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982, p. 117.

⁴ King, *Minorities*, p. 150.

Obvious though the Hungarian character of the region was, its autonomy was spurious because its status differed in no way from that of the other sixteen regions. This was made clear by Article 20 of the 1952 Constitution which stipulated that 'the laws of the Romanian People's Republic and the decisions and directives of the central organs of state are compulsory in the territory of the Hungarian Autonomous Region'.⁵ The State Council of the Autonomous Region, designated by Article 57 as 'the organ of state power', was merely a facade. In practice, the region did not enjoy self-government of any kind and the only distinguishing features of its existence were that most of its officials were Hungarian, the Hungarian language could be used in administration and in the courts and that bi-lingual Hungarian and Romanian signs were put up on public buildings.⁶ Suspicions that the region was merely a sop to minority aspirations and a pretext for not creating more cultural facilities for the Hungarians elsewhere were reinforced by the abolition in 1953 of the specifically Hungarian wing of the Party. But with its disappearance went any mechanism for defending the collective rights of the Hungarians; the extent to which the regime was prepared to tolerate the expression of individual rights became clear in 1956.

The impact of the 1956 Hungarian uprising in Budapest on Hungarian students and workers in Romania raised questions for the Party leadership about their loyalty to the state. Yet the repercussions of the revolt were also felt amongst the Romanians, where the discontent with the regime was manifested in protests which had a largely economic basis. Dej cut short a visit to Yugoslavia to address the crisis, provoked by student and workers' demonstrations in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj and Timișoara. Thousands of arrests were made in the centres of protest, especially amongst Romanian and Hungarian students. To placate the workers, the government announced that the minimum wage would be raised and special concessions were given to railwaymen in the form of free travel.

Convergence of interest with the Soviet Union rather than simple slavish obedience determined the stance adopted by Dej and his colleagues. They had two main concerns: a successful

⁵ G. Ionescu, pp. 217-18.

⁶ King, *Minorities*, p. 152.

revolt in Budapest against Communist rule might spread to the 2 million-strong Hungarian community in Transylvania, thus sparking an anti-Communist rising in Romania; and a non-Communist Hungary might lay claim to parts of Transylvania.

The Romanian trio of Dej, Bodnăraș and Ceaușescu pushed for firm military intervention against Imre Nagy's Hungarian government and the Soviet troops based in Romania had been among the first to cross the Hungarian border on 26 October to reinforce the Soviet presence. A key figure in the Romanian Party's support for Soviet intervention in Hungary was the NKGB agent Emil Bodnăraș. During the uprising he was appointed Minister of Transport and Communications and in this capacity he supervised the widening of roads of strategic importance to Soviet troops for their transit through Romania. He was probably instrumental in arranging for the detention of Imre Nagy in Romania, for on 21 November he and Dej visited Janos Kadar, the new First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party; the following day Nagy was abducted by KGB officers and flown to Bucharest to be granted what the Romanian Foreign Minister Grigore Preoteasa termed 'asylum'. In fact, he was held, with other members of his government, in a *Securitate* safe house just north of Bucharest, where their interrogation was co-ordinated by Boris Shumilin, chief KGB adviser 'for counter-revolutionary affairs', and refused the visits from UN officials promised by Preoteasa to prove he was not under duress. Many other prominent supporters of Nagy were interrogated in Romania, among them the Marxist critic György Lukacs.

Ostensibly, the visit by Dej and Bodnăraș to Budapest was to supply the food and medicines urgently needed as a result of the uprising; in practice it was to help with the reorganisation of the Hungarian security service, the AVH, which had been decimated. Several hundred *Securitate* agents of Transylvanian Hungarian background were sent to Budapest and Bodnăraș's extended stay in the Hungarian capital indicates that he was closely involved in this operation. The *quid pro quo* was the condemnation by the new Hungarian leader Kadar, during a visit to Bucharest, of those Hungarians in Transylvania who had demonstrated their support for the Hungarian uprising as nationalists with irredentist aims.⁷

⁷ G. Ionescu, p. 294.

Dej's concern over the reaction of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania to the uprising led him to pursue a policy of integration and his first step was to dilute the provision for Hungarian language-teaching in schools, making it more difficult to receive a Hungarian-language education up to university level in Romania. At the apex of the system of primary and secondary education in Hungarian stood the Hungarian-language Bolyai University in Cluj, the Dr Petru Groza Agricultural College in the same city and the Medical-Pharmaceutical Faculty at Târgu-Mureș. After 1956, this structure was whittled away. Hungarian-language instruction began to be moved from single-language schools to dual languages ones.⁸

This effectively blurred the distinct status of the language and was carried to its logical conclusion with the merger of the Bolyai University in Cluj with the Romanian-language Babeș University in the same city. At a meeting of the teaching staffs of both universities in June 1959, at which Nicolae Ceaușescu as Central Committee Secretary, is said to have presided, the merger was ratified⁹ but the image of consensus was shattered by the suicide of a pro-rector of Bolyai University, László Szabedi. Despite the fact that special streams in each faculty in the merged Babeș-Bolyai University were reserved for Hungarian students and classes and examinations were conducted in Hungarian, the closure of the separate university removed the distinct institutional identity which had ensured the provision of Hungarian-language teaching and exposed it to erosion from within the new structure. And that erosion was not slow to take place.

A similar dilution took place in the administrative role played by Hungarians within the university itself. At the time of the merger, the rector was Romanian but two of the three pro-rectors were Hungarian. By 1967, the number of pro-rectorships had

⁸ Whereas in the school year 1955-6 there were 1,022 primary schools in which education was offered solely in Hungarian, by 1958-9, this number had dropped to 915. In that same period, the number of primary schools giving instruction in both Romanian and Hungarian increased from 38 to 124. In the sphere of secondary education, a parallel decrease in Hungarian-language provision took place: in the same interval of time, the number of 493 schools had fallen to 469, whereas the number of dual-language ones had risen from 10 to 77. R. King, *Minorities*, p. 153.

⁹ M. Shafir, *Romania...*, p. 160.

been increased to five, of whom three were Romanian; seven of the eight deans were Romanian as was 61 per cent of the teaching staff.¹⁰ In the Dr Petru Groza Agricultural College, separate language instruction in Hungarian was dropped.

The policy of integration was extended in 1968 from education to local administration when two districts with heavy Szekler (Transylvanian Magyar) population were transferred from the Hungarian Autonomous Region to the Brașov region and three new ones with a majority Romanian population added. The proportion of Hungarians in the new region was reduced from 77 to 62 per cent, while that of Romanians increased from 20 to 35 per cent.¹¹ Concern about these changes spilt over from the Hungarian minority to Budapest. Within a month three senior members of the Hungarian Politburo went to Romania, and while there were no tangible results from their visit, they may have prevented the introduction of even further measures which would have affected the position of the Hungarian minority.

Dej's integrationist policy was a concomitant of his assertion of autonomy from the Soviet Union. National Communism demanded national cohesion; hence the steps designed to obscure the distinct identity of the Hungarian Autonomous Region. They were paralleled by a series of anti-Russian measures in 1963, which involved closing the Russian Institute in Bucharest, eliminating Russian as a compulsory school subject and replacing the Russian names of streets and public buildings with Romanian ones. Romanian economic and foreign policy became more independent of Moscow and with these changes came a notable shift in the severity of police rule. Dej authorised the opening of the political prisons in 1962 and according to official figures, some 4,500 prisoners were released over the next two years.¹²

Dej's policy was continued by Nicolae Ceaușescu. Some impartial observers detected an initial improvement in the position of the minorities, noting a wider use of the Hungarian language in Transylvania but still pointing out restrictions on cultural exchanges.¹³ Periodicals and newspapers from Hungary were only

¹⁰ King, *Minorities*, p. 154.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹² V. Georgescu, *The Romanians...*, p. 246.

¹³ King, *Minorities*, p. 158.

available in limited numbers, although a publishing house in Bucharest specifically dedicated to the publication of literature in Hungarian and German continued to produce generous print-runs of original works by Transylvanian Hungarian and German writers, as well as editions of novels and poetry written by national Hungarian and German authors. A measure of the prudence accorded by Ceaușescu to the minorities was the fact that his first domestic visits after becoming Party leader were to areas with large Hungarian populations; his speeches set the limits of his minority policies. On the one hand, he recognised the right of the Hungarians to their own culture and to use their own language but on the other he was firm in his condemnation of 'nationalism and national chauvinism'.¹⁴ Within a short time his preference for integration became clear in the proposals for administrative reform of 1967, but as his rule developed integration turned into assimilation.

In 1967 and 1968, 'the Hungarian problem' for the regime was put into the context of administrative and territorial reform of the country as a whole.¹⁵ To allay the concern of the Hungarian minority that the territorial reorganisation would remove the little autonomy that it had, Ceaușescu explained that 'geographical and social – political conditions, the national composition of the population, traditional cultural connections...will have to be taken into consideration when forming the [new] counties' and emphasised that 'the local administrative bodies will see to it that

the provisions of the country's constitution regarding the use of the mother tongue in the state administration, in schools and in cultural institutions are strictly observed in those localities where co-inhabiting nationalities live'.¹⁶

The recent promotion of Mihai Gere and Janos Fazekas, the two most senior Hungarians in the Party leadership, to high office gave the minority some cosmetic reassurance.¹⁷ From the Politburo, Fazekas proposed that a 'strong county', comprising the most heavily populated Hungarian areas, be created. However, his

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ N. Ceaușescu, vol. 2, 1969, p. 543.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 547–8.

¹⁷ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*..., p. 124.

proposal was not accepted by the Party commission charged with establishing the new administrative areas. Instead, a compromise was worked out which still left a strong concentration of Hungarians, but in two counties rather than in a single one.

The new form of organisation into counties passed by the National Assembly in February 1968 left Hungarian speakers in a majority of more counties than previously in the old regions but without the possibility of creating a single, clearly delineated, monolithic bloc of Hungarians, which could have presented a more convincing claim for autonomy. Some Hungarian counties were singled out for special investment under the development plan which aimed at equalising the levels of industrialisation to promote faster economic growth of the country. It is difficult to establish where administrative and economic reasons gave way to conscious population engineering. In one case, however, boundary changes turned a Hungarian majority into a minority.

In contrast to its reaction to the dissolution of the Hungarian Autonomous Region in 1960, the Hungarian Government made no move to suggest disapproval of this territorial reorganisation. Hungary's relations with Romania were conditioned by Soviet attitudes towards the latter and the fidelity of the Romanian leadership to Moscow during the Hungarian uprising of 1956; conversely, the revolt by Budapest ensured that for a brief period till the end of the 1950s the treatment of the Hungarian minority was not an issue. However, as Dej developed his policy of autonomy from Moscow, a concomitant expression of Hungarian interest in Transylvania was heard. While never officially raising the minority question, senior Hungarian Party figures alluded to it on a number of occasions.¹⁸

The Romanian leadership put this renewed Hungarian interest in their minority down to Moscow's irritation at the new course adopted by Bucharest in its domestic and foreign policy. In response, the RCP sponsored the publication of historical studies supporting Romania's rights to Bessarabia; most notable was the release of Karl Marx's *Notes on the Romanians* in December 1964, which broke the taboo of speaking openly about the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and the Romanian identity of its population. This tit-for-tat response by Dej was the first in a series that were

¹⁸ King, *Minorities*, pp. 163-4.

to punctuate Romanian-Soviet relations until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Thus Transylvania was not just a Romanian-Hungarian issue but a trigger for Romania to hint at reopening the question of Bessarabia; even today, after Moldova's affirmation of its independence, Romania's legitimate interest in the new republic can be invoked by Budapest as a parallel for Hungarian interest in Transylvania.

The Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 presented Ceaușescu with his first major challenge concerning the Hungarian minority. The convergence of Soviet and Hungarian interest was once again mirrored in the strong criticism which both governments levelled at Ceaușescu for condemning the invasion. Fears that unrest among the minorities might be used as an excuse by the Soviet leaders to intervene in Romania led Ceaușescu to make a rapid tour of the major urban areas with significant Hungarian populations at the end of the month. His speeches in the two Hungarian counties of Covasna and Harghita were concessionary: ten major enterprises would be built there during the current five-year plan, for 'there can be no true equality of rights, the national question cannot be considered solved, if material conditions are not ensured'.¹⁹ Two telegrams from groups of Hungarian and German intellectuals in support of the Party's attitude over Czechoslovakia were widely published.²⁰ In September, Ceaușescu visited the counties bordering Hungary and Yugoslavia, obviously to nip any possible ethnic problems in the bud and to consolidate his position as a leader of all the peoples of Romania. Ceaușescu's fear of an outbreak of minority discontent was probably exaggerated: the Hungarian contribution of troops to the invasion of Czechoslovakia aroused as much disapproval among Hungarians in Hungary as it did among the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, and a common fear of the Soviet Union helped to improve relations between the ethnic groups in Transylvania. This improvement was reflected in increasing the number of radio and television programmes in Hungarian and German and in extending the print-runs of minority language publications. Greater representation of Hungarian and German interests was suggested by the establishment

¹⁹ Fischer, p. 148.

²⁰ King, *Minorities*, p. 165.

in 1969 of separate Hungarian and German Nationality Workers Councils.

Romanian sensitivity to the status of its German minority had grown as a consequence of the Polish Government's decision to allow members of its own German minority to emigrate to West Germany after the signing of the non-aggression treaty between the two states on 7 December 1970.²¹ The Polish decision prompted calls from the Germans in Romania to be allowed to emigrate in greater numbers than hitherto, to which the Romanian Government responded by launching a press campaign highlighting the difficulties experienced by those who had already left. Ceaușescu himself spoke out against German emigration, stressing that there would never be 'any agreement or understanding with anyone on the removal of the population of German or any other nationality,'²² while official spokesmen pointed to the advantage to the Romanian economy of the skilled German workers. No mention was made of the secret agreement reached by Ceaușescu with West Germany at the time of the opening of diplomatic relations in 1967 for the payment in Deutsche marks to the Romanian Government of a 'head tax' on each German allowed to emigrate. The sums to be paid by the West German government ranged from 4,000 to 10,000 DM, depending upon the age and professional qualifications of the persons concerned.²³ These monies were transferred to the Romanian Government in the form of credits. In addition, similar sums were also demanded unofficially by officers in the Directorate of Passports of the Ministry of the Interior in Bucharest or by the local *Securitate* commandants in the provinces through whom applications for emigration had to be made. In practice, the ransom for the Germans of Transylvania and the Banat was paid twice, once by the West German government and a second time by the family. An idea of the sums involved can be gauged from the fact that almost 200,000 Germans emigrated from Romania between 1967 and 1989.

²¹ Limited emigration of Germans from Romania had been permitted in the 1950s and 1960s to East Germany but the bulk of the 17,290 Germans who had left since 1950 had gone to West Germany after the opening of diplomatic relations between it and Romania in 1967.

²² King, *Minorities*, p. 166.

²³ An article in *Der Spiegel* on 21 October 1985 stated that the rate was 4,000 DM per child and 6,000 DM for a pensioner.

There were no such similar hard currency spoils to be made from the Hungarian minority. The Hungarian currency was a soft one and presented little interest. In addition, from the ideological point of view, emigration of an ethnic minority from one fraternal Socialist state to another could be construed as a failure to solve the 'minority problem' in the state of origin. For the Hungarian government, there was certainly every reason to discourage large-scale emigration of the Transylvanian Hungarians to Hungary: it would pose enormous social and economic problems since a considerable proportion of a population some one-fifth the size of the total population of Hungary was involved.

For the time being, the principal momentum for that leverage came from Soviet concern over Bucharest's foreign policy. Ceaușescu's state visit to China in June 1971, coupled with a warming of Yugoslavia's relations with Beijing, led Moscow to fear the development of a pro-Chinese camp in the Balkans which would challenge Soviet dominance of the area. Hungary took on the role of defender of the Soviet interest by criticising both Yugoslavia and Romania, while Soviet displeasure with Romania was manifested in the fact that the Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin, and not the Party leader, Brezhnev, met Ceaușescu during his brief stop-over in Moscow on his way back from the Far East. On the very day of Ceaușescu's return to Bucharest, 24 June, the degree of Soviet disapproval could be measured by Hungary's dramatic resurrection of the minority question; this was the first occasion when it was done publicly since the imposition of Communist rule in Eastern Europe.²⁴ Zoltan Komocsin, a member of the Hungarian Politburo, declared in a statement to the Hungarian parliament: 'We are fundamentally interested in having the inhabitants of both our country and Romania, including those of Hungarian nationality living there, come to understand that the fate and destiny of our peoples are inseparable from socialism.' Komocsin's statement stung the Romanians and a long article by Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Central Committee Secretary in charge of relations with other Communist parties, appeared in *Scînteia* on 9 July, accusing the Hungarians of 'flagrant' contradictions in their reporting of Ceaușescu's visit to China and advising them not to interfere in the internal affairs of Romania, where all

²⁴ King, *Minorities*, p. 167.

working people enjoyed equal rights, irrespective of their nationality.

On the same day, Ceaușescu himself alluded to the Hungarian intervention in a speech to Party representatives on political and cultural ideology in which he took the opportunity to broadly explain the regime's policies towards the minorities. They were, in his view, part of the new society which was being created under Communism in Romania:

Alongside the Romanian people have settled on large expanses in the course of centuries, and are living side by side Romanians, Magyars, Germans and other nationalities; everything that has been built, in the conditions of the past, but especially the successes obtained at present in socialist construction, are the joint work of the Romanian, Magyar and German working people and of those of other nationalities who...benefit today from the results of the building of our new society.²⁵

This equated the new society with the Romanian nation and it followed from this conception that the minorities belonged not to other nations but to the Romanian one. All citizens had equal rights, regardless of nationality. Ceaușescu warned that 'Anybody trying to pursue a policy of national hatred pursues a policy against Socialism and Communism – and must be treated consequently as an enemy of our Socialist nation.'²⁶

Ceaușescu was careful to appeal to ideology in framing his scarcely veiled criticism of the Hungarians, an approach he consistently adopted in rebutting any attacks on his regime from within the Socialist camp, but his use of 'enemies of Socialism' was applied equally to Western countries and appeared more frequently in his rhetoric after the signing of the Helsinki Summit Final Act in 1975. The Helsinki Agreement marked a watershed in the importance attached by the international community to the observance of human, and by extension, minority rights. It made respect for these rights a matter of legitimate concern for the international community and in practice linked economic credits and trade to a country's performance in this area. Romania's

²⁵ N. Ceaușescu, *Romania on the Way of Building up the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society*, vol. 6, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1972, p. 190.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

record on human rights since the imposition of Communist rule was one of the worst in the Socialist bloc. While the regime had ratified or signed a number of international instruments guaranteeing the rights of individuals and national minorities, its respect for them was totally arbitrary.

Safeguarding minority rights had always been hampered by problems of definition. The guiding principle behind the international agreements on human rights was the primacy of the individual rights of the citizen. Both the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights (1950), to which Romania was not a signatory, and the Helsinki Final Act, to which it was, emphasise that rights are to be enjoyed and protected individually, hence the use of the 'persons belonging to minorities' formula in them, and take the view that the individual and not the minority group is the possessor of rights.

The practice of the United Nations followed this principle. After 1948, when the General Assembly of the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the violation of individual human rights by governments was regularly condemned and was regarded as a matter for international interest. The same could not be said about minority rights. Whereas individual rights were no longer a strictly internal matter for the member governments of the UN, the issue of minority rights was, in most cases, kept as an internal preserve of the state by appeal to Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, which precluded intervention in 'matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state'. Ceaușescu availed himself fully of this article in attempting to deflect criticism of his record on human rights' observance. In the absence of a legal definition of minority rights and the consequent lack of treaty-based obligations covering them, measures in support of minority protection were largely limited to expressions of concern in the UN Commission of Human Rights in Geneva.

The absence of a legal concept for minority rights did not mean that minority protection in certain areas of human activity such as culture had not been legally established. In defending such protection, international instruments had accepted that there was a collective dimension to individual rights. The UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), to which Romania had adhered, stated in Article 27:

In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities

exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and to practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

By committing Romania to the Helsinki Agreement of 1975, Ceaușescu opened the door to international scrutiny of the regime's treatment of the Hungarian and German minorities in Transylvania and the Banat and at the same time offered encouragement to those governments who wished to press the matter to do so. While the West German authorities were anxious not to prejudice the emigration of Germans from Romania, the Hungarian government was bound by no such consideration. Indeed, the latter was aware of the pressure it could exert on Bucharest by exploiting any publicity that was unfavourable for a state whose autonomous foreign policy was partly dependent on Western approval. Other facts converged to make the minority issue a more sensitive one and to aggravate relations between Hungary and Romania. One was the increasing disparity between the living standards of the two countries. Economic reform and Soviet subsidies had enabled the Hungarian government to provide its citizens with greater prosperity and a quality of life which outstripped that in Romania, causing at once admiration amongst the Hungarian minority and envy amongst some Romanians. At a popular level, the sight of Hungarians from Hungary bringing goods unavailable in Romania to their relatives in Transylvania was often mentioned with resentment to foreign visitors to the province.

A second development was the opportunity afforded by the Helsinki Agreement to the Hungarian minority to release its pent-up anger at what they regarded as discriminatory policies. This they did in *samizdat* publications produced illegally in Romania, which increased considerably the amount of information about the Hungarian minority's position, and as a result forced Bucharest to justify its policies. Hungarians in Transylvania began to speak out about their treatment at the same time as a small number of Romanian intellectuals, such as Paul Goma and Vlad Georgescu (discussed below), made their own general criticism of the regime. A string of protests began to be heard from Transylvanian Hungarians in the spring of 1977. One particular case was that of Janos Torok, a textile worker in Cluj, who publicly complained in March 1975 about the process for pre-selecting candidates for

the Grand National Assembly whom he declared would not represent the best interests of the factory workers, in particular those of the Hungarian minority. He was detained whilst speaking, severely beaten by officers of the *Securitate* and then interned in the Dr Petru Groza psychiatric hospital, where he was injected with large doses of drugs. He was freed in 1978 but still required to report regularly for checkups.²⁷

Most of the Hungarians arrested for anti-regime protests were driven by their resentment over the erosion of provision for education in their native tongue. Some even died in mysterious circumstances. Lajos Kuthy, a Hungarian teacher from Brașov, was found shot dead in a forest near the city in 1976. Before his death, he had collected signatures for a petition seeking the setting up of Hungarian classes in the Brașov region. Jeno Szikzai, another teacher from Brașov, was picked up by the *Securitate* in the spring of 1977 and accused of persuading Hungarians to send their children to schools with Hungarian sections rather than to purely Romanian ones. He was beaten during interrogation and, on his release from custody, committed suicide.

The education issue dominated memoranda prepared in 1977 by two Hungarians from Transylvania, György Lazar (a pseudonym) and Lajos Takács.²⁸ Takács's memorandum was far more significant. Apart from the fact that the author was bold enough not to hide behind a pseudonym, the senior positions that Takács had held in the RCP gave particular weight and credence to his protest. As a former rector of the Bolyai University in Cluj and instrument of the regime in forcing its merger in 1959 with the Babeș University and vice-president of the Hungarian Nationality Workers Council at the time of writing the memorandum, Takács was well placed to furnish reliable data about the erosion of teaching in Hungarian in the education system and

²⁷ *Romania: Forced Labor*, p. 40.

²⁸ The existence of Lazar's text was first revealed on 17 April 1977 in the *Sunday Times*. Its sixty pages chronicled the experience of the Hungarian minority in Communist Romania and catalogued measures considered by the author to be highly discriminatory. Special attention was paid to the regime's educational policy which the author showed had resulted in a drastic fall in the availability of Hungarian-language tuition at primary, secondary and university level. *Witnesses to Cultural Genocide*, New York: American Transylvanian Federation, Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, 1979, pp. 117-29.

to comment upon the effectiveness of the Workers Council. From references in the document, it appeared that the memorandum was written in November 1977 but knowledge of it only reached the Western media in the spring of 1978, when *The Times*, the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian* referred to it on 25 April.

Looking back at the activity of the Hungarian Workers Council, Takács concluded that it did not fulfill the objectives for which it was set up. On the one hand, its consultative status was a fiction, since links with Hungarian workers were tenuous and thus it was unable to inform the Party leadership about those issues which were of particular concern to the Hungarian minority. On the other hand, the Council's committees met irregularly and without a specific agenda. For this reason, 'the Council has been unsuccessful in generating any respect whatsoever among the populace and, due to the Party members who participate in its organs, it is slowly but surely losing the confidence of the masses'.²⁹

Turning to educational measures, Takács argued that the merging of Romanian and Hungarian streams in a single school had led to a gradual reduction in the number of schools providing instruction in Hungarian. He pointed out that there were fewer opportunities for Hungarians to continue their education in their mother tongue, citing figures for the 1976-7 academic year which showed that of 34,738 Hungarian secondary school students, 15,591 attended technical secondary schools where the subjects were taught exclusively in Romanian. The explanation for this was not to be found in 'steering' Hungarian pupils towards Romanian schools but in the lack of sufficient teachers for those pupils who wished to study in Hungarian. Without the possibility of study in their mother tongue, Hungarian pupils, Takács argued, ended up with a limited general education and little technical training and were unable to enter institutions of higher education. Quoting Ceaușescu's words that the language problem 'must be solved in a manner which fulfills the conditions for students to learn in that language which they know best', he called upon the Ministry of Education to organise the school system in such a way that pupils could choose instruction in the language 'which they know best'.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

In support of his case, he referred to Law 26 (1974), which provided for the creation of Romanian language classes, regardless of the numbers of students, in those communities where there were Hungarian and German language schools. This law guaranteed Romanian children instruction in their own language, however small their number in village, and Takács suggested that this provision be applied to Hungarian and German children as well. Here, Takács was diplomatically attempting to turn the negative aspects of Law 278 (1973) into positive ones for the minority communities. This law stipulated that at primary level at least twenty-five applicants in a given year were necessary before a class teaching either Hungarian or German was opened; at the secondary level, the minimum rose to thirty-six. No such conditions were imposed for Romanian classes.

Instruction in Hungarian required qualified teachers and their supply was linked to the provision of higher education in Hungarian. This had deteriorated considerably as a result of the merger of the Bolyai and Babeș Universities in 1959. The basis for the merger was the establishment of two parallel sections in Romanian and Hungarian for all subjects but in practice, this dual system was only operated in certain subjects while the majority were taught only in Romanian. As a result, not only did the numbers of Hungarian teaching staff drop rapidly but the proportion of Hungarian students in the university population did as well. Takács produced comparative figures for the academic year 1958-9 (the year of the merger) and 1976-7 to prove his point.³¹ Furthermore the Dr Petru Groza Agricultural College in Cluj agreed

³¹ In 1958-9, there were 45 Romanian and 36 Hungarian teachers in the faculty of chemistry, and in 1976-7, 63 Romanians and only 14 Hungarians. In the intervening nineteen years, 37 new Romanian staff were appointed, compared with only one Hungarian. Analogous figures for other faculties were:

		1958-9	1976-7
Law	Romanians	18	23
	Hungarians	15	4
Economics	Romanians	23	76
	Hungarians	15	19
Mathematics	Romanians	31	51
	Hungarians	19	14
History	Romanians	29	20
	Hungarians	14	7

Source: *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

to teach classes in Hungarian in 1959. The effects of these measures was to reduce the proportion of Hungarian students entering higher education and the effect on the secondary school system in the technical schools, whose importance in a rapidly industrialising economy was obvious for job opportunities and advancement, was evident even over a period of three years.³²

Takács also addressed cultural provision as a whole for the Hungarian minority. There had been a cutback in 1973 in the production of Hungarian-language newspapers; some dailies were printed only three times in a week or their size was reduced. Romanian newspapers suffered a similar fate, the explanation being a shortage of newsprint. However, the Romanian newspapers were restored to their original size a few months later, whereas the Hungarian ones were not. The regime made much of the fact that nineteen publishing houses in Romania produced material in Hungarian; Takács pointed out that between 1970 and 1977 twelve of them published fewer than ten works. He complained about the restrictions placed on subscribing to technical journals printed in Hungary, which compounded the difficulties facing young Hungarians who wanted to pursue a career in Romanian industry. It added to the obstacles faced by Hungarians who lived outside an area of minority concentration who, after being denied instruction in their own language, were put at a disadvantage in competition with native Romanians because of the need to learn a second language and thus ended up with a limited general education and little technical training.³³

Ceaușescu's stance on these issues was clear from his speeches.

³² According to Takács, in the year 1957-8, there were 4,082 students attending Hungarian-language institutions of higher education and 1,000 to 1,500 Hungarian students at Romanian-language institutions out of an undergraduate population of 51,094. Hungarian students thus represented 10 per cent of all students. In 1974-5, this percentage had fallen to 5.7 (6,188 Hungarian students out of a total of 108,750). In the county of Cluj, where the Hungarians made up 26 per cent of population (1966 census), there were 174 Romanian-language classes and nine Hungarian ones (one in agriculture, the remainder in engineering subjects). This development of technical schools followed from the education law of 1973 which aimed to make secondary education serve the needs of an industrialising economy; two-thirds of schools were to be devoted to technical subjects and only one-third to the humanities. G. Schöpflin and H. Poulton, *Romania's Ethnic Hungarians*, London: Minority Rights Group, 1990, p. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

In June 1973, he declared that 'we cannot set up special institutes of physics, chemistry or other specialities for young people who do not know Romanian'. Yet he also recognised that those who do not learn the language would be 'in a position of inequality compared to Romanian young people' because they would not have 'free access to all the forms of higher education'. Entering his admonitory mode, he insisted that 'Romanian is not a foreign language to any youth living in Romania! It is the language of our socialist society and it must be learned by all Romanian citizens'.³⁴

From a Romanian standpoint, there was reason in Ceaușescu's words, since the creation of a form of positive discrimination in favour of Hungarians, be it in education or employment policy, was a luxury the developing state could not afford. Yet the Transylvanian Hungarians could respond that they had indeed enjoyed such positive discrimination in the 1950s, when economic development was less advanced. This led the Hungarians to mistrust the policy of equalisation through modernisation with suspicion; increasing investment in those Hungarian-dominated counties in order to level out development was regarded as a covert means of diluting the Hungarian concentration of population and inducing assimilation.

Assimilation was encouraged in three ways: first, by the migration of Romanians into Transylvania and the movement away from the province of Hungarians and Germans (the latter through emigration); secondly, through the resultant decrease in the number of minority language schools by applying the quotas for minimum numbers of pupils; and thirdly, by promoting the use of Romanian as the language of the majority and the one essential for social mobility, even for the minorities. There was little doubt that equalisation had produced assimilation; the question arose as to whether policies of equalisation had been intended to produce assimilation. Supporters of Ceaușescu's policies answered 'No' and members of the Hungarian minority said 'Yes'. Migration of Romanians to the towns, including those in Transylvania, was a concomitant of urban development, since until the application of Romania's development plan, most Romanians lived in rural areas. Conversely, a larger proportion of Hungarians, Germans and Jews lived in towns. On the one hand, the emigration of

³⁴ Quoted from Fischer, p. 245.

Germans and Jews had reduced the cosmopolitan character of Transylvanian towns, releasing property for occupation by Romanians. On the other hand, the regime's strategy to expand industry and stimulate urban growth had, according to one pro-Bucharest account, ensured that since 'Hungarians make up less than 8 per cent of the population of Romania, it is inevitable that the proportion of Hungarians to Romanians in these cities will continue to shrink'.³⁵ Economic needs, not ethnic affiliation, the regime's defence ran, determined labour distribution.

The three letters of Karoly Király suggested the contrary. Király was the Vice-President of the Hungarian Nationality Workers' Council who had resigned as candidate member of the RCP Executive Committee (Politburo) and as First Secretary of Covasna county in 1972 for 'personal' reasons. The letters revealed that the real reason for his resignation had been his dissatisfaction with the discriminatory policies pursued against the Hungarians. The effects of these policies were catalogued in 1977 in three letters, respectively to Politburo member Ilie Verdeț, responsible for ideological affairs and policies towards the nationalities, to Janos Fazekas, also a member of the Politburo, and the third to Central Committee member Janos Vincze.³⁶

In his letter to Verdeț, Király reiterated the criticism of the Hungarian Workers Council voiced by Takács. He complained that because it met irregularly, its proceedings were not even conducted in Hungarian but in Romanian, and statements made there were 'prefabricated and censored by comrades in the county leadership', it had lost all prestige among the minority. Many Party officials, including those of Hungarian origin, used Romanian exclusively in their contacts with Hungarian workers, thereby displaying a lack of sensitivity and tact and giving the impression that the use of Hungarian was forbidden. Perhaps Király's most telling observation was that 'national sentiment is a sensitive question which must be treated with special attention; it is a question which relates to the quality of nationality, and its solution cannot be measured in percentages as can industrial progress and results'. A sense of discrimination is imparted as much by attitudes as by actions, as many members of a minority will testify, and the

³⁵ Quoted from Shafir, *Romania. Politics*, pp. 162-3.

³⁶ The texts appeared in *Witnesses to Cultural Genocide*, pp. 163-78.

degree of sensitivity shown by the regime was evident from Verdeț's failure to reply.

Király therefore sent the two further letters. Any suspicion that his objectivity might have been a victim of highly sensitive feelings and that his perception of discrimination was impressionistic was dispelled by his letter to Fazekas, in which he detailed 'errors' in the handling of what he called 'the nationality question': opportunities were constantly being reduced for Hungarian children to study in their native tongue; restrictive quotas were being placed on the numbers of Hungarians who could be employed in certain institutions; and those who dared to speak out about minority matters were subjected to intimidation by the police. In the letter to Vincze, he provided further examples of the problems encountered by the Hungarians: the Hungarian State Theatre in Tîrgu Mureș had a Romanian director who did not speak Hungarian; the largely Hungarian towns of Tîrgu Mureș and Sovata had non-Hungarian-speaking Romanian mayors; the bilingual Hungarian-Romanian signs erected in Covasna in 1971 were removed, and by 1975 not a single locality was identified in Hungarian. Hungarian officials in factories were being replaced with Romanians who did not know Hungarian: at the '23 August' works and the chemical factory in Tîrgu Mureș, not a single director or deputy director was Hungarian.

Király contended that this situation was in violation of Romania's constitution, the principles of Marxism-Leninism and of fundamental human rights. The fault lay, he boldly maintained, with the Party leadership and he called for a renunciation of policies based on 'demagogy, the personality cult and the capricious application of Marxism'.³⁷ Here were complaints that were not just the preserve of Hungarians but were shared by fellow citizens such as Goma; the unprecedented fact that they were as voiced by a leading Party figure some ten years before Silviu Brucan's admonitory statements has not received the recognition that it deserves by the Romanian public.

After sending the August and September 1977 letters, Király was finally summoned to Bucharest in October to discuss the first letter addressed to Verdeț. During discussions with Verdeț, he was asked to reveal the names of others who had helped

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

to draft it. He refused to do so without asking their permission, and after the meeting he secured the agreement of eight other members of the Hungarian minority to be identified with his letter. A week later he saw Verdeț again, this time for discussions lasting eight hours. His proposals were ignored and he therefore consented to the publication of his letters in the West. In February 1978, Király was arrested in Tîrgu Mureș just days after his protests became known over Radio Free Europe and he and his family were banished to Caransebeș, a town in the south-west of the country. Hundreds of homes belonging to members of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania were searched by the *Securitate* for copies of Király's letters. In October, he was allowed to return to Tîrgu Mureș but he and his friends were placed under surveillance.

There were indications, nevertheless, that some of Király's criticisms elicited a response from Ceașescu. The belief held by many Hungarians in a hidden agenda to limit the number of managerial and skilled positions available in the Hungarian areas to members of the minority, while Romanians from other areas were given special incentives in housing to take up jobs in these areas, was partly addressed by Ceașescu in a speech to the Nationality Councils in March 1978:

Generally speaking, we must take action to direct graduates –especially educational cadres, but also medical and agricultural cadres –to their native localities, thus avoiding sending them from one part of the county to another.³⁸

However, like many of Ceașescu's declarations, this one ran counter to existing legislation and was merely window-dressing. From the evidence available, its impact was minimal, for two decrees issued in 1976 introduced to combat unemployment, or 'parasitism' as it was officially camouflaged, gave the authorities the power to direct labour to wherever was deemed necessary. Graduates continued to be assigned to jobs where they had to remain several years after graduation, without regard for their ethnic background; thus Hungarian (and German) graduates were often sent to Romanian areas and, not unnaturally, settled down

³⁸ Quoted from Schöpflin and Poulton, p. 15.

with a Romanian partner. Once more the policy of equalisation could be invoked for this process of ethnic dispersal, but for Hungarians it continued to smack of assimilation. There is no doubt that the resentment felt by the Hungarian and German minorities increased as living standards began to deteriorate.

The severe earthquake of 1977 followed by floods in 1980 and 1981 disrupted industrial production and reduced the export of foodstuffs which Ceaușescu now looked to in order to pay off the foreign debt incurred through industrialisation. In late 1981, the country's foreign debt rose to \$10.2 billion and Ceaușescu requested its rescheduling. On the recommendation of the IMF, he cut imports. The implications of this cutback have not been fully appreciated, for Romania had been a net importer of foodstuffs since the end of the 1970s.³⁹ More importantly, the very act of having to accept conditions from the Western banks dealt an enormous blow to Ceaușescu's inflated pride, generated xenophobic postures in him and drove him into a self-imposed economic isolation after 1980. On its heels came political isolation, which made him less dependent on the support of foreign governments that might have exercised some influence in persuading him to moderate his policies towards the minorities.

Equally dispiriting for the minorities was the sense of cultural isolation. This was fed by the legacy of the different historical experience of Romanians and Hungarians. The lack of what might be called 'synchronisation' between the essentially Western cultural experience of the latter and Eastern Orthodox experience of the Romanians and the resulting divergencies in behavioural values did little to foster convergence between the two peoples. Throughout the 1980s, as Ceaușescu's personality cult and his cultivation of ultranationalist feeling intensified, so an intolerance towards the Hungarian minority in particular reared its ugly head in official circles. Banners proclaiming 'We are masters in our own home' began to appear with increasing frequency at major rallies and reflected Ceaușescu's conception of the absolute sovereignty of the Romanians in their nation-state. Since Romanians were in their own home, they must therefore be masters in it. The implicit corollary was that the minorities were

³⁹ A.H. Smith, 'The Romanian Enterprise' in I. Jeffries (ed.), *Industrial Reform in Socialist Countries*, London: Edward Elgar, 1992, p. 204.

aliens. Insistence upon the 'national unitary' character of the Romanian state in regime-sponsored propaganda merely ignored the reality: the national unitary state did not exist. Given the numerical strength and diversity of its minorities, it merited rather the description of a multi-ethnic or multi-national state. Those who claimed and continue to claim that it is a unitary state are merely trying to make the reality fit their theory.

The official Romanian position that the country was not a multi-ethnic state but a unitary one debarred the minorities from claiming any allegiance to a second state. For the Hungarians of Transylvania to whom this author has spoken through the years, loyalty to the Romanian state, to have any meaning, must be one that is freely given and not coerced from them. They were hardly likely to give this loyalty freely if they were placed in the position of 'second-class' citizens in the ancestral homeland which they shared with the Romanians. In the view of the Hungarians, the enjoyment of equal rights with the Romanians was equated with the granting of territorial autonomy for those of their number who lived in compact areas. Minority or group rights could, according to the Hungarians, only be protected by according group autonomy, an argument rejected by Ceaușescu, who consistently emphasised the individual rights enjoyed by each citizen in Romania, irrespective of nationality. Of course, the formal rights recognized by the Romanian Constitution meant very little, in practice under his rule.

There was no clearer indication of this than the arrest in January 1983 of the editors of *Ellenpontok* (Counterpoints), a clandestine Hungarian-language journal which had been produced in Oradea since the end of 1981. Some of its contributors, among them pastor László Tökes, denounced the oppression of the Hungarian minority and interpreted it as an expression of traditional Romanian nationalism of which Ceaușescu was merely the latest exponent. Nine issues appeared before the editors were detained, beaten and finally expelled to Hungary. A second *samizdat* publication, *Erdelyi Magyar Hírnagyokseg* (the Hungarian Press of Transylvania), first appeared on 20 May 1983 in the form of mimeographed reports chronicling the deteriorating economic and social conditions and it was the main source of information about strikes in Transylvania in November 1986. One of its editors, Geza Szocs, was forced to leave the country in 1986 after several of his statements

on the situation of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania were passed on to the CSCE cultural forum in Budapest.⁴⁰

Relations between Hungary and Romania deteriorated sharply when, in December 1986, the Hungarian Academy published a three-volume history of Transylvania. Its appearance elicited an angry response from a number of Romanian historians. On 12 March 1987, the Romanian daily *România liberă*, the most authoritative and widely-read newspaper in the country after the Party newspaper, carried a lengthy article by three regime-sponsored historians, Ștefan Pascu, Mircea Mușat and Florin Constantiniu, condemning the 'conscious falsification' of the history of Transylvania presented in the work.⁴¹ Romanian anger was especially aroused by the fact that the general editor of the history, Bela Kopeczi, was the Hungarian Minister of Education and the work was thus deemed to have government approval. The charge of 'conscious falsification' was based on the Hungarian denial of proofs to the existence of a Romanian population in Transylvania before the beginning of the thirteenth century, the date at which Hungarian historians argue that the Romanians crossed from south of the Carpathians to settle in the province. This denial, the Romanians maintained, questioned the legitimacy of Romanian possession of the area, and this sedition led the Ministry of Education to prohibit distribution of the history in Romania. It was only in 1990, when the director of the 'Nicolae Iorga' Institute of History asked this author to obtain the work for its library, that it became clear that the country's premier institution of historical research did not possess a copy and that only a select group of historians called upon to do the regime's bidding had been favoured with access to the work.

The lengths to which the Romanians' ire carried them were demonstrated by the placing of a full-page advertisement in *The Times* (London) on 7 April 1987 through a Greek intermediary. The advertisement repeated the charges levelled at the *History of Transylvania* in the article in *România liberă*, but behind the mask of the Greek sponsor added another in a waspish language shorn of any diplomatic restraint. The authors of the history were

⁴⁰ V. Socor, 'Dissent in Romania: the Diversity of Voices', *RFE Research*, vol. 12, no. 22 (5 June 1987), p. 5.

⁴¹ For an English translation, see L. Peter (ed.), *Historians and the History of Transylvania*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1992, pp. 174–96.

...interested less in the fate of the Magyar nationality in Romania and more in causing diversion and misleading public opinion. Their action is part of the attempts to create a false question of 'Minorities in Romania' which has no objective justification, as in the years of Socialism the Romanian state has completely and definitely solved the national question.

There is no doubt that these sentiments echoed the real feelings of Ceaușescu and his acolytes but their attempts to sway international opinion were seriously undermined by the final reference in the advertisement to the failure of the Hungarian uprising of 1956, in which the Romanians appeared to gloat:

In their fight against Socialism back in 1956, Hungarians have had no luck. They try now, with higher hopes, against socialists. There's still to be seen the way in which the western world will support this manoeuvre, as recently Hungarians have requested in Vienna, and, also and more interesting, the way Russians will swallow it.

By bringing the Soviet Union into the dispute, the advertisement – and Ceaușescu by extension – implied that the Soviet leadership was once again using the Hungarians as a channel for interfering in Romanian affairs. Indeed during his visit to Romania only a month later, Gorbachev referred to the minority question in his speech broadcast live to the Romanian public on 26 May. Underlining the need for friendship among peoples, the Soviet leader stated:

It is known what great importance it [relations between the minorities] has for us and what great importance Lenin accorded to all aspects of national relations, asking that delicacy and special attention be given to solving these problems. I think that the Leninist precepts in this respect are still topical today.⁴²

Ceaușescu turned a deaf ear to this counsel. Faced with such obduracy, Karoly Király took up his pen once more. In a letter dated 16 August 1987 to Ceaușescu, he described the economic situation as 'lamentable', the political atmosphere as 'oppressive' and derided 'the triumph of official mendacity, which has become

⁴² A.U. Gabanyi, 'Gorbachev Presents "Restructuring" to the Romanian Public', *RFE Research, Romanian Situation Report* (hereafter SR)4 (29 May 1987), p. 12.

the basis of state policy'. Blame for this state of affairs had to be shared equally between Ceaușescu and the Party *nomenklatura*, which Király regarded as the leader's accomplice in misrule.⁴³

On the minorities issue, he characterised Ceaușescu's policy as one of forced assimilation which was bringing discredit to Romanian internationally and which could 'only sow the seeds of trouble'. He linked the defence of the rights of the Transylvanian Hungarians to that of Romanians' rights in Soviet Moldavia, thus reasserting a common cause to which he had put his name in a statement in February 1985, alongside Geza Szocs and two Romanian writers, Dorin Tudoran and Marius Tabacu.⁴⁴

The Hungarian minority was also seriously affected by Ceaușescu's campaign of village redevelopment or 'systematisation'. Originally outlined in 1972, the plan was given fresh impetus by the Romanian president in March 1988 when he proposed that the number of villages be reduced by more than half, from 13,000 to 5-6,000 by the year 2000; the displaced inhabitants would be re-housed in 558 'agro-industrial' towns. Although the programme was not specifically aimed at Hungarian villages and indeed most of the redevelopment took place in villages around Bucharest, the plan was bound to have a disproportionate effect upon the Hungarian minority because of the large number of small settlements in the predominantly Hungarian counties of Harghita

⁴³ RFE Research, *Romanian SR/1* (13 January 1988), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁴ Voices were also raised in protest at the restrictions on German cultural life. A group of ten young German writers from the Banat, known as *Aktionsgruppe Banat*, provided a critique of the Ceaușescu regime from the left, highlighting the nationalist bias in education and culture. Most of the group's members were arrested for interrogation and then dismissed from their jobs as journalists and teachers and forced to emigrate to West Germany. One of the most graphic accounts of life under Ceaușescu for a member of a minority was given by one of the writers, Richard Wagner, in his narrative *Ausreiseantrag* (Exit application), published in West Germany in 1988 (English trans. *Exit: a Romanian Story*, London: Verso, 1990). The regime occupied everything, including language. Independent opinions could not be expressed: the regime decided what was realistic literature, and what the writer considered realistic was then judged to be unrealistic. Nationalism in the classroom was exemplified by the fact that in English lessons a map of Romania and not of Britain hung on the wall. Wagner's terse, telegraphic and stark language matched perfectly the world he described. In a series of cameo portraits and situations, people are pictured as leading a monotonous, monochrome life, whispering in dark corners with expressionless faces. In this claustrophobic existence, even the abnormal comes to be accepted as normal.

and Covasna which were targetted for 'phasing out' (*dezafectare*), the planners' euphemism for either the destruction or cutting off of electricity and communications to produce atrophy.⁴⁵ Other information about the effects of systematisation in the county of Mureș, 44 per cent of whose population was Hungarian, was passed on by officials in the county to Western embassies in Bucharest and asserted that 250 of the county's 480 settlements faced an uncertain future 'for economic reasons'. These settlements contained nearly 150 churches and thirty historical monuments, thirty-five of which were considered to be of prime importance. Almost half the churches were Roman Catholic, Reformed or Unitarian and some sixty were Romanian Orthodox. As the officials pointed out, the systematisation plan 'equally affected Hungarian, Romanian and Saxon settlements'.

The impact of the programme upon a settlement pattern in Hungarian-inhabited parts of Transylvania which had a centuries-old history fuelled an anxiety in Hungary which was tapped by an emerging opposition group, the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), and a reforming minister, Imre Pozsgay. The HDF organised a demonstration against systematisation in Budapest on 27 June 1988 which attracted 40,000 participants, the largest protest on the streets of the capital since 1956.⁴⁶ Ceaușescu responded immediately by closing the Hungarian consulate in Cluj, a move unprecedented in relations between 'fraternal' states. In the text of a speech delivered on 28 June and released by the Romanian news agency *Agerpres* on the following day, Ceaușescu

⁴⁵ A list of such villages in Harghita reached Britain in April 1989. They were, in alphabetical order of commune (in brackets): Cușmed, Inlăceni (Atid); Andreeni, Firtănuș, Laz-Șoimuș, Meșoru Mic (Avrămești); Ciobăniș, Cotormani, Ghiurche (Ciuscângeorgiu); Atia, Calonda (Corund); Fâncel, Valea Rotundă (Dealul); Tengeheler (Ditraău); Făgetel (Frumoasa); Dealu Armanului, Nuțeni, Plopiș, Preluca, Toleşeni, Zăpodea (Gălăuș); Ghiduș (Lazarea); Poiana Fagului, Puntea Lupului (Lunca de Jos); Bulgăreni, Firtușu, Păltiniș, Păuleni, Sâncel, Satu Mic (Lupeni); Călugăreni, Chinușu, Ghipeș, Locodeni, Petreni, Raresș (Mărtiniș); Aluniș, Dejuțiu, Mătișeni (Mugeni); Satu Nou (Ocland); Becaș, Bucin, Șașvereș (Praid); Făgetel, Martonca, Sineu (Remetea); Vilac (Săcel); Hosasău, Sântimbru Băi (Sâncrăieni); Valea Uzului (Sânmartin); Duda (Subcetate); Seneteta (Suseni); Bențid, Cădaciu Mare, Cădaciu Mic, Chedia Mare, Chedia Mică, Nicoleni, Turdeni (Simonești); Pintic, Recea (Tulgheș); Iașu, Ighiu, Nicoleşti, Obrănești, Vasileni (Ulieș); Desag, Poiana Târnavei (Zetea).

⁴⁶ M. Rady, *Romania in Turmoil*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1992, p. 73.

gave details of a letter which he had sent to the Hungarian Prime Minister, Karoly Grosz, in which he called for an end to 'nationalist and chauvinist activities', clearly inferring that the Hungarian Government had been behind the Budapest demonstration. He stressed the value of the Romanian road to Socialism and declared that the problems of Romanian citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin, were the responsibility of the RCP. Hungary's objections to Romania's minority policies, he continued, were only aimed at drawing attention away from Hungary's own problems.

In a move to satisfy Hungarian public opinion, Grosz told journalists on 30 June that he intended to visit Romania in order to discuss the problem of national minorities. The tension was maintained by a resolution of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian parliament which, without mentioning the closure of the Cluj consulate, declared 'action unprecedented in the practice of socialist countries does serious harm to Hungarian-Romanian relations and draws attention to the fact that all this is in flat contradiction to treaties concluded between the two countries, to the norms of European cooperation, as well as to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975'.⁴⁷ On 1 July, the Hungarian parliament passed a resolution calling on the Romanian Government to review the systematisation programme and to withdraw it. By doing so it would 'remove a major obstacle hindering the coming together of the Hungarian and Romanian nations'. The destruction of 'all that is valuable in villages condemned to liquidation in the name of Socialist progress would mean an irreplaceable loss not only to the Hungarian, German and other national minorities but to the Romanian people itself'.⁴⁸

Grosz was caught by surprise by Ceaușescu's invitation to meet him at such short notice: at the end of August, in Arad near the border with Hungary. To avoid possible accusations of not wanting to negotiate with the Romanians, Grosz decided to go but was clearly outmanoeuvred by Ceaușescu, who implied that improvements in educational facilities for the Hungarian minority would be made. Grosz's favourable assessment of the meeting angered the Hungarian opposition and weakened both his own

⁴⁷ Untitled anonymous article in *New Hungarian Quarterly*, no. 3 (1988), p. 59.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.

position and that of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party. The issue of Transylvania was proving as much an internal Hungarian political problem as one of bilateral relations with Romania. Those relations took another turn for the worse in November when Karolyi Gyorffy, Hungary's commercial counsellor in Bucharest, was detained after allegedly causing a traffic accident and then expelled, the Romanians claimed, for distributing leaflets hostile to Romania. Matyas Szuros, the Hungarian Party secretary responsible for foreign affairs, accused the Romanians of fabricating the story. 'The facts and even the Romanian statements prove without any doubt that this was a premeditated police action...which introduced a new element of tension into Hungarian-Romanian relations.'⁴⁹ In retaliation, the Hungarians expelled Pavel Platona, the political counsellor at the Romanian Embassy in Budapest.

As his 28 June speech demonstrated, Ceaușescu adopted a new tack in trying to deflect the complaints of the Hungarian government over his treatment of the minorities. He suggested that they were inspired by the Hungarians' own desire to use the minorities issue as a means of diverting the attention of Hungarian public opinion away from the hardships engendered by the economic reforms pursued by the Budapest authorities. This approach gave Ceaușescu the opportunity to display his credentials as an orthodox Communist who had remained more faithful to the tenets of Marxism-Leninism than the reformist Gorbachev and his ilk in other members of the Socialist bloc. The tone set by Ceaușescu was followed by the Romanian media. On 4 September, *Scînteia* accused the Hungarian press of distortion in its coverage of Romanian affairs and suggested that it should mind its own business.⁵⁰

While ignoring the Hungarian political reforms, the Romanian press reproduced negative economic news from the country throughout 1989. On 5 February, *Scînteia* quoted the Hungarian news agency MTI on failures to fulfill planned targets, and on 13 April it carried an item from the Hungarian Party daily on the heavy price increases of the previous three years. Transylvanian Hungarian sycophants of Ceaușescu were regularly trotted out

⁴⁹ *Independent*, 23 November 1988.

⁵⁰ M. Shafir, ' "Revisionism" under Romanian General's Fire: Ceaușescu's Brother Attacks Hungarian Positions', *RFE Research, Background Report/86 RAD* (17 May 1989), pp. 2-3.

to reinforce the implied link between Hungarian criticism of minority policies and the reform process in Hungary.⁵¹

In tandem with the Romanian attacks on the Hungarian reforms, the campaign against the Hungarians was maintained on the historiographical front but with an added injection of animosity from one of the President's brothers, Lieut. Gen. Ilie Ceașescu, a deputy minister of defence. In an article in the April 1989 issue of the monthly military review, *Lupta Intregului Popor* (The Struggle of the Entire People), the general described the Hungarians of Transylvania as one of many nomad tribes whose level of civilisation was inferior to that of the local Romanian population. The Hungarians had shown 'boundless cruelty' towards the peoples they had conquered and their descendants always sought to extend their conquests: 'They never restricted themselves to what, at one time or another, they obtained through cruelty, force of arms, fraud [and] compromise.'⁵² He established a link between the reform process in Hungary and the drive for what he called 'territorial revisionism'.⁵³

Whatever the troubles experienced by the Hungarian economy, they paled into insignificance beside the scale of Romania's own difficulties; nevertheless, it was Hungary that felt the greatest impact of Ceașescu's failed policies. The appalling economic hardship in the country drove thousands of Hungarians from Romania into Hungary. The numbers seeking asylum more than doubled from 6,500 in 1987 to 15,000 in 1988 (figures for 1985 and 1986 were 1,700 and 3,300 respectively). In 1988, 13,400 refugees were granted temporary residence permits in Hungary, the vast majority being Hungarians from Transylvania, with only 8 per cent Romanians. By August 1989, the numbers had risen to 25,000, with more than 300 arriving each week, of whom some 25 per cent were Romanians. From January to May 1989 alone, 5,000 refugees entered Yugoslavia. In 1988, 1,650 refugees were returned to Romania but in March 1989, Hungary signed the UN 1951 Geneva Convention relating to refugees, the first Eastern bloc country to do so. As a result, only twenty-nine asylum seekers were sent back by July 1989.⁵⁴ In an effort to stem the flow,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Schöpflin and Poulton, *Romania's Ethnic Hungarians*, pp. 18-19.

Ceașescu approved the construction in late 1988 of a fence along those areas of the border with Hungary which lacked one but the work was never completed, perhaps because, as an accidental by-product of economic calamity, emigration had the merit of reducing the numbers of the Hungarian minority. Romanian refugees also continued to make their way across, the most famous being the gymnast Nadia Comăneci in November 1989 and the most remarkable, two shepherds with a flock of 300 sheep. By November, official Hungarian figures put the number of refugees from Romania at 24,000, one-sixth of whom were ethnic Romanians. This was an understatement of the true exodus, since many Romanians did not register with the Hungarian authorities but used the country for transit to Austria and the rest of the West.

The Soviet Union steered clear of the conflict between Hungary and Romania but its embarrassment at Ceașescu's policies was clearly manifested by its decision to abstain from voting on a resolution adopted in March 1989 by the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva to investigate human rights violations in Romania. Hungary joined the resolution's sponsors, thus provoking further Romanian anger. Another opportunity for Romanian wrath was provided by the reburial of the remains of Imre Nagy and his colleagues in Budapest on 16 June 1989. The Bucharest media presented the occasion not only as a huge demonstration of Hungarian irredentism directed against Romania but also as an attack on Socialism and the Warsaw Pact. The Romanian government protested to Hungary's ambassador in Bucharest about the 'anti-Socialist, anti-Romanian, nationalist-chauvinistic and revisionist demonstrations held in Budapest on 16 June'.⁵⁵ On the same day, the Romanian agency *Agerpres* reported that meetings of working people had taken place throughout the country, at which the participants had expressed their 'profound indignation' that Nagy's reburial had 'turned into a political action that was clearly fascist, irredentist in nature and aimed against the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, Socialism and Communism and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation'.⁵⁶ In fact, neither Romania nor Hungarian –

⁵⁵ M. Shafir, 'Romania and the Reburial of Imre Nagy', *RFE Research, Background Report*/117 (30 June 1989), p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Romanian relations were mentioned in the speeches delivered at Nagy's funeral, despite the removal of the former Hungarian Prime Minister to Romania in 1956 for interrogation by the KGB. What clearly provoked the Romanian reaction was a declaration, published the day after the funeral and signed by representatives of Romanian *émigré* organisations and the HDF which accused the authorities in both Hungary and Romania, and the Ceașescu regime in particular, of having created a crisis in Transylvania. To rectify this, the signatories called for 'autonomous political and cultural representation' of each nation in the province, as well as 'education for the minorities in their own language'.

The charge of 'anti-Socialist' contained in the protest note to the Hungarian ambassador echoed Ceașescu's barely concealed disdain for the reforms in Hungary, which the TASS correspondent at the reburial stressed had the support of Moscow. Ceașescu had reiterated his commitment to rigid central economic planning and insisted in his address to the Romanian Party Conference on 14 December 1987 that market forces were incompatible with Communist society. In dealing with the reforms advocated by the Soviet leader Gorbachev, Ceașescu argued that he had already applied similar measures in Romania. Thus *Scînteia*, in its report of the Nineteenth Soviet Party Conference in 1988, restricted coverage of Gorbachev's speech to those measures which had already been taken in Romania, thereby suggesting that the Soviet leader was following Ceașescu's example. Furthermore, Gorbachev's admission that the Soviet Union had taken important decisions without 'proper consultation with friends' gave Ceașescu a justification for not applying *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness).⁵⁷

One effect of Ceașescu's draconian economies was supremely ironical in view of the status of the Hungarian language in Romania. The reduction in Romanian television coverage to two hours per evening in 1988 led Romanian children in western Transylvania to turn to Hungarian television for entertainment. In the process, they picked up the language. Ceașescu, the arch Romanian nationalist, can thus be credited with a measure whose direct

⁵⁷ M. Shafir, 'From Sofia to Beijing: Reactions to the 19th Soviet Party Conference', *RFE Research, Background Report*/133 (13 July 1988), p. 5.

result was to facilitate the spread of the Hungarian language among Romanian children. This sense of the absurd was coupled with one of growing desperation felt by the entire population of Romania. Amongst the Hungarians, the need to restore self-confidence prompted the appearance of a new *samizdat* journal entitled *Kialto Szo* (Desperate Cry) in 1988. The editors renounced any claim to pursue a narrow group interest, pledging the journal to serve as a catalyst in bringing together 'noble Hungarian and Romanian aspirations' and as a forum for 'popularising each other's artistic values'. The target of their censure was not the Romanian people but 'those majority forces that continue, both covertly and openly, to promote and assert discriminative and chauvinistic minority policies and fuel anti-Hungarian sentiments, thereby misleading and turning otherwise honest Romanians against us'. There was a growing realisation amongst Romanians that the minorities' quest for greater freedom was one which should be shared by them and, as if to encourage self-confidence, the first issue carried an article entitled 'Beyond the Ceaușescu era', which looked to a political system in which individuals and ethnic minorities would 'enjoy the fruits of democracy'.⁵⁸

Kialto Szo printed an analysis of the life of the Reformed Church, which acquired a prophetic dimension in the light of events leading to the Revolution. According to official statistics, the Church had some 700,000 members, most of them drawn from the Hungarians in Transylvania. The traditional forms of church service, such as Sunday worship, did not attract the mass of the faithful and therefore the pastors concentrated on Bible classes, choir singing and family visits to convey the Church's message. The report stated that there were no significant obstacles to organizing these activities; their success was dependent on the pastor's zeal, faith and willingness to make sacrifices.

Relations between the congregations and the church authorities, between pastors, deans and bishops, differed considerably in the two districts into which the church was divided. László Papp, the Bishop of Oradea, was opposed to the new forms of church activity and strictly forbade what he called 'pietist' deviations. Even services for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were

⁵⁸ S. Koppány, 'New Hungarian Minority Publication Appears in Transylvania', *RFE Research, Background Report*/53 (21 March 1989), pp. 1-3.

forbidden by him, not to mention the organization of Bible classes. The report described Papp's attitude as one 'preferred by a Communist state founded on atheist ideology'. The situation in the Cluj district was considered to be less autocratic. Bishop Gyula Nagy neither encouraged active pastors nor punished them.⁵⁹ Yet even Bishop Nagy's submissiveness attracted the criticism of a leading figure in the Reformed Church, Istvan Tökes. Formerly a lecturer at the Protestant Academy in Cluj and a deputy bishop, he was dismissed from the former post in 1983 and the latter in 1984 for his criticisms of the church leaders' co-operation with the regime. In a letter which reached the West in August 1988, he renewed his call for the church to follow its own constitution, suggesting that only in this way could state control be averted. After writing the letter, the seventy-two-year-old theologian was banned in spring 1988 from preaching in his native town of Cluj. Tökes complained about the lack of freedom in church elections, which were so rigged 'that the will of the electors cannot be realized', and the failure to fill pastoral posts canonically, appointments being made according to 'the despotism of the leadership or the bishops'. His list of accusations also included the charge that church bodies 'were the blind tools of the powers that be' and that the picture of the church's activity, the number of faithful and the number of pastors, was regularly distorted. He called for the convention of a new synod to work out a radical new church order.⁶⁰

Istvan Tökes's non-conformist spirit was shared by his son László. Born on 1 April 1952 in Cluj, he became a pastor in the Reformed Church and was appointed to a parish in the Transylvanian town of Dej. He was a contributor to *Ellenpontok* in 1982, writing an article on abuses of human rights in Romania which led to his harassment by the *Securitate*. He and his friends were followed and eventually Tökes was dismissed from his parish in Dej by order of Bishop Nagy and assigned to the village of Sânpietru de Câmpie, some forty kilometres from Cluj. Tökes refused to go and instead went to his parents' house in Cluj, where he spent two years unemployed. He used part of this time to launch

⁵⁹ Anonymous article, 'Church Life in Romania', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 1989), pp. 356-9.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 359-60.

a letter-writing campaign in 1985 among the Hungarians of Transylvania in order to gather statistics about facilities for education in Hungarian.⁶¹ His plight was brought to the attention of the Foreign Relations Committee of the US Senate and as a result, Bishop Papp was instructed by the authorities in 1986 to appoint Tökes assistant pastor in the city of Timișoara, one of mixed Romanian, Hungarian and German population.⁶²

As the systematisation programme gathered momentum, so Tökes used his sermons to encourage resistance to it. He called for solidarity between Hungarians and Romanians, as they were both suffering at the hands of the regime, and made no special pleading for Hungarian villages. In the summer of 1988, he talked with representatives in all thirteen deaneries of the Reformed Church to organise resistance to proposals to destroy villages; at his own deanery meeting in Arad in September, he and three other Hungarian pastors spoke in favour of a statement which attracted the support of fifteen of the twenty-six pastors present. It read:

We, the deaneries of the Reformed Church, propose to resist these programmes [of destruction] and make contact with other denominations and fight alongside them. There may be economic and political reasons for them but we believe the moral consequences are so incalculable that the churches must fight to gain a compromise.⁶³

The statement was sent to Bishop Papp and within twenty-four hours, every signatory hand been visited by *Securitate* officers and cross-examined about the meeting. Tökes's own file was handled by the head of the Timișoara *Securitate*, Col. Traian Sima, who authorised visits to Tökes's church flat by anonymous visitors who would hurl insults and threats. A cultural festival organised with the Catholic Church in Timișoara on 31 October led to threats of expulsion being made against those students who had participated. Bishop Papp sent a letter to Tökes banning all youth activities in the Oradea diocese, which included Timișoara; un-

⁶¹ L. Tökes, *With God, For the People*, as told to David Porter, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, pp. 65, 79.

⁶² Rady, *Romania in Turmoil*, p. 86.

⁶³ Tökes, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

deterred, Tökes decided to hold another festival in the spring of 1989 with the Orthodox Church, whose metropolitan agreed. On 31 March, at the instigation of the Department of Cults (successor to the Ministry of Cults) and the *Securitate*, Bishop Papp ordered Tökes to stop preaching in Timișoara and ordered him to move to Mineu, an isolated parish in northern Transylvania. Tökes refused to comply with the order and his congregation expressed its support for him. The bishop then began civil proceedings to evict him from his church apartment. Since he was no longer deemed by the Timișoara authorities to be a resident of the city, his ration-book was withdrawn and power supplies to his apartment were cut off. Tökes's parishioners rallied round, bringing him and his wife and young child food and fuel. Their action contrasted with that of his fellow pastors. Fear of incurring Bishop Papp's displeasure – 70 per cent of the 200 pastors in the diocese had never been promoted from probationary status and were still directly answerable to Papp – coupled with a feeling that Tökes's defiance was pointless, meant that the authors of an open letter appealing to the bishop to put an end to the harassment of Tökes could not find one pastor who was prepared to add his signature.⁶⁴

However, there was one quarter from which Tökes could rely on support, that was Hungary. The ability and willingness of the Hungarian media and authorities to publicise Tökes's plight marked him out from ethnic Romanian dissidents who had no ready-made champions waiting in the wing to take up their cause and ensured that Tökes would remain a running sore for the Ceaușescu regime. Tökes's wife was among the first to acknowledge this. After the Revolution she declared: 'The international publicity held them off. If he had been an unknown and nameless figure, they would have killed him sooner or later.'

On the other hand, it was probably the publicity that caused the authorities to use the cover of the law, as well as physical intimidation, to remove Tökes from Timișoara.⁶⁵ On 24 July 1989, an interview with Tökes was shown on Hungarian television in which he spoke out against the systematisation plan, describing it as an attempt to eradicate Hungarian culture in Transylvania.

⁶⁴ Rady, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

On 6 August, he was detained for questioning by the *Securitate* and then released. On 25 August, Bishop Papp dismissed Tökes from the ministry, an action which violated church law. Elod Kincses, Tökes's lawyer, pointed out that, according to the Reformed Church's statutes, only the disciplinary body of the Church had the right to dismiss clergy. On 14 October, eight members of the Reformed Church Council were brought to a meeting under conditions of arrest and voted to expel Tökes; the other twenty-three members had gone into hiding.⁶⁶

In the meantime, members of Tökes's congregation were arrested and beaten. One parishioner, Erno Ujvarossy, who in May had petitioned Bishop Papp in support of Tökes, was found murdered in woods outside Timișoara on 14 September. Istvan Tökes was arrested briefly in October when he arrived in Timișoara to visit his son. A court order was made for Tökes's eviction on 20 October. Tökes lodged an appeal. Tudor Postelnicu, the Minister of the Interior, ordered Sima to enforce the order. On 2 November, four attackers armed with knives broke into the apartment while *Securitate* agents looked on but fled after Tökes and friends managed to fight them off. After this incident, in which Tökes was cut on the forehead, the Romanian ambassador was summoned to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and told of the Hungarian Government's concern for the pastor's safety.

Parishioners continued to smuggle in food and firewood to the sacristy of the church for Tökes, despite the attention of *Securitate* agents. On 28 November, Tökes was informed that his appeal had been turned down and that his eviction would be enforced on 15 December. As Christmas approached, parishioners brought gifts of food to the sacristy in groups and afterwards gathered outside Tökes's flat next to the church to show their support. The two guards were unable to move them along and this gave hope to his supporters. On the day of the eviction, a human chain was formed around the block in which he lived and the militia were unable to gain access. Tökes leaned out of his window and thanked the crowd but advised them to leave. His advice was met with cries of 'We won't leave!' and several hundred stayed in groups close to the apartment.

⁶⁶ F. Tupper-Carey, 'Romania', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 18, no. 2 (Summer 1990), p. 181.

The victimisation of Tökes and his family took its toll on his pregnant wife Edit who, depressed and exhausted with the strain of harassment and a sleepless night awaiting eviction, fell ill. Tökes asked his neighbour to get word to the family doctor on the morning of 16 December and she duly appeared. Within half an hour the mayor of Timișoara himself appeared with three doctors. Desperate to defuse the situation, the mayor tried to persuade Edit Tökes to go into hospital but the family doctor encouraged her to resist. The mayor relented. Shortly afterwards, workmen arrived and began to repair the windows of the apartment, shattered a month earlier as an act of intimidation. The door broken down by the four attackers was also restored to the amazement of his supporters who maintained their vigil outside. Throughout the morning their numbers grew, swelled by young Romanians who were attracted by the sight of such a large crowd and the rumour that the *Securitate* were unable to disperse it.⁶⁷

Tökes acknowledged to the mayor that 'the situation was improving' and the latter seized upon this to ask him to tell the crowd to disperse. Tökes agreed and went to the window. Thanking them for their support, he advised them to leave, saying that their gathering was illegal. The crowd roared its disapproval, chanting in chorus 'Don't believe him!' Furiously, the mayor stormed out of the apartment, to the jeers of the crowd. At noon he returned, complaining angrily to Tökes that the protesters had not left. Tökes took the mayor to the window and invited him to address the people. The mayor gave an assurance that Tökes would not be evicted but to no avail. Some in the crowd accused the pastor of collaborating with the authorities. 'We want it in writing,' they cried, and added to their demand a retraction of the decision to transfer Tökes to Mineu as well as confirmation of his appointment as pastor in Timișoara.

Rashly the mayor promised to produce such a document in one hour, but as this was a Saturday the promise was unrealistic. The ministries closed at lunchtime on that day, and after an hour the excuses were trotted out that no one was available in the legal department. At 2 p.m. the deputy mayor arrived. He warned that unless the demonstrators went away, Tökes would be held responsible for the consequences. Tökes suggested that the leaders

⁶⁷ Tokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-8.

of the different churches in the city be brought to the apartment to witness the mayor's promise and the deputy mayor telephoned the mayor with the idea. It was rejected. The pastor then proposed that a delegation from the street be brought in. The deputy mayor agreed. Six Romanians and four Hungarians sat down in the church office and discussed the situation with him. Progress was reported to the mayor who, strangely, now promised that a document would be sent from Bucharest in an hour. Representatives of the congregation would be able to collect it from the town hall. The representatives duly went to the town hall after an hour but there was no document. Instead, the mayor sent back an ultimatum with them that if the crowd had not dispersed by 5 p.m., the fire brigade would be sent in to scatter them with water cannons.

The demonstrators' defiance had been fuelled by the conviction that members of the *Securitate* were in Tökes's apartment and were either holding him against his will or preparing to evict him. This fear was incited by provocateurs in the crowd, who could be clearly seen shouting. While the core of the crowd was made up of people who had joined the vigil against eviction, most of the newcomers had been drawn by the sight of the original protest or by news of it. As Tökes himself related:

Some had no idea what had started the demonstration. All day people came and went; as some left to go to their homes or to queue for food, others arrived to take their place. Consequently, I had to go to the windows frequently to assure new arrivals that I was still alive and had not been evicted.⁶⁸

After the mayor's warning, Tökes pleaded with the crowd to go home but they were convinced that he was acting under threats from the *Securitate* and refused. Some called upon him to come down into the street and lead them but Tökes realised that this might play into the hands of the regime who could put the blame for the protests on the Hungarian minority.

By 7 p.m. the crowds now filled several streets extending from the church. It contained many students from the local polytechnic and university. Around the church Romanians linked hands with Hungarians in a human chain and hymns were sung. About

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

thirty minutes later, the first bars of '*Deșteaptă-te Române*' ('Romanians awake!'), a Romanian national song which had been sung for the first time in a public place during the Ceaușescu era in the Brașov protests of November 1987, were falteringly taken up. Unknown in the Hungarian community, the song was an anthem of resistance to oppression and a sign that a Hungarian protest had now become a Romanian revolt. As Tökes himself put it:

A demonstration of solidarity became a revolt in solidarity. I could not have imagined this. Hungarians and Romanians had always been opposed to each other. The regime had fostered real hatred between the two peoples. The support I received from the ethnic Romanians during those days was an overwhelming experience. How moving to see the Romanian crowd under my windows chanting their national hymn. Until that day, the hymn had separated us. From that day on, it united us.⁶⁹

After the anthem came the first bold cries of 'Down with Ceaușescu!', 'Down with the regime!' and 'Down with Communism!'. The crowd then began to move off from the church and cross the bridge towards the city centre and the Party headquarters. They stoned its windows before militia reinforcements, brought up just before 10 p.m., managed to drive the demonstrators back to Tökes's church, where they turned water cannons on them. The crowd seized the cannons, broke them up and threw the parts into the Bega River. They then marched on shops, smashing the windows and broke into a bookstore, where they burned copies of books on Ceaușescu in ceremonial piles. By midnight the street outside Tökes's flat and the church was relatively quiet as the violence continued elsewhere in the city.

Three hours later, Tökes's torment resumed. The door to his apartment was broken down by plain-clothes *Securitate* agents as he, his wife and two friends scampered out by another exit into the courtyard and climbed a ladder to the church upstairs. They barricaded themselves in the sacristy but the door was broken down and they were all seized. The male friend was punched

⁶⁹ V. Socor, 'Pastor Tökes and the Outbreak of the Revolution in Timișoara', *RFE Research*, vol. 1, no. 5 (2 February 1990), p. 24.

and kicked by the agents, while a uniformed officer named Veverka buried his white-gloved fist repeatedly into Tökes's face and stomach and swore at him. With his face covered in blood, Tökes, wearing a clerical robe and yellow slippers, was dragged into his office below to find the head of the Department of Cults, Cumpănașu. The beating continued until Cumpănașu ordered a halt. He told Tökes to sign a blank piece of paper, on which would be entered the pastor's acceptance of his eviction and dismissal. Tökes refused, was punched again and then complied. He and his wife were then hustled into separate cars and driven to the *Securitate* headquarters in Timișoara. Once there, only the driver left Tökes's car; after ten minutes he returned and both cars sped off to the village of Mineu. Two days later, on 19 December, their interrogation began in the town of Zalău.⁷⁰

László Tökes was questioned in the Army HQ, Edit in a hospital. There were several interrogation teams who used a mixture of abuse and sympathy in an attempt to extract from them confessions that they were foreign agents. Their interrogation continued over the next two days but on the morning of 22 December, the *Securitate* failed to appear to take them to Zalău. The militia remained posted outside the house in Mineu until army jeeps appeared and ordered them away. Tökes's parents-in-law arrived soon afterwards and together they heard the news of Ceaușescu's flight on the radio. A reflex of obedience still led the couple to report to the *Securitate* offices in Zalău, where they were told they were free to go. Only twenty-four hours earlier, a statement by Bishop Papp had been issued, accusing the pastor of 'indiscipline', of 'grossly violating the statute of organisation and functioning of the Reformed Church in Romania and the laws of the Romanian state' and of 'denigrating and making a tendentious presentation of the realities in our country'.⁷¹ A week later, the bishop fled the country to Hungary and from there travelled to Metz to join his son.

Fate has its own way of rewarding the courageous and punishing tyrants. Despite the divisiveness of Ceaușescu's policies towards the peoples of Romania, their shared experience of suffering under his rule brought them together. It was the defiance by Tökes

⁷⁰ Tökes *op. cit.*, pp. 162-75.

⁷¹ Rady, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

which provided the catalyst for the display of ethnic solidarity which sparked off the overthrow of the dictator. This convergence of circumstance started the series of events which led to the Revolution. One may argue that it was only a matter of time before Ceaușescu fell, given his isolation in the international arena and the growing dissent at home. But it was to the credit of Tökes and his flock that they pressed on with their protest against a bishop's abuse of power, characteristic of a denial of human rights which typified the Ceaușescu regime. Tökes's stand, based on the right of his church to defend the interests of its faithful, transcended the narrowness of a sectarian claim and acquired the symbol of a common cause of peoples united against oppression. The durability of that union was fragile, for the Revolution and events thereafter revived the divisions between Hungarians and Romanians and exposed the shallowness of Ceaușescu's claim to have solved the 'national question'. The prediction that the Hungarians in Transylvania were so alienated by the discriminatory policies of the regime that after the removal of Communist rule fighting might break out between them and the Romanians proved sadly to be accurate in March 1990 with the disturbances in Tîrgu Mureș.⁷² Until the attitudes and posturings on both sides are abandoned, there can be no foundation for building that understanding and tolerance which are the essence of good communal relations.

⁷² J. Campbell, 'Introduction' to S. Borsody (ed.), *The Hungarians: A Divided Nation*, New Haven, CT: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1988, p. xxvii.

CULTIVATING SUPPORT: THE ROLE OF BESSARABIA

If the subject of Transylvania is the most emotive in contemporary Romanian politics, the question of relations with the Romanian population east of the river Prut in the territory known formerly as Bessarabia and today as the Republic of Moldova elicits equally strong reactions. Just as the Hungarian Government claims a justifiable interest in the fate of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, so too does the Romanian state argue that it has a similar interest in the affairs of the Republic of Moldova. In the Ceauşescu period the issues of Transylvania and Bessarabia (at that time the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic [SSR]) were used as a counter-balance to each other in the triangular relationship between Romania, Hungary and the Soviet Union. Moscow used the Transylvanian issue both to put pressure on Romania and to encourage Hungary's loyalty. Romania responded by reminding Moscow that veiled irredentism was a game that two could play and stoked the Bessarabian controversy. Yet Romania's interest was expressed far more subtly than the Hungarian one in Transylvania, despite the fact that Romanians represented more than 60 per cent of the Moldavian SSR's population, compared with the 7 per cent which the Hungarians constituted in Romania. In the first place, the Soviet Union was a powerful neighbour with whom Romania shared a frontier 800 km. in length. Secondly, if Romania's claims to the republic's territory became too strident, the Soviet Union could use economic sanctions against her or even threaten invasion. An understanding of the Soviet-Romanian controversy over Bessarabia, which re-emerged in the final year of Dej's rule and simmered throughout the Ceauşescu period, demands an incursion into the province's past and the different interpretations given to that past by Romanian and Soviet historians.

The problem begins with names. The principality of Moldavia emerged in the fourteenth century. It covered an area on both sides of the river Prut, extending in the east to the river Dniester. It is the designation of the area between the two rivers which gives rise to the problem. The southern area, originally a separate jurisdiction from Moldavia, was called Bessarabia after its ruler Basarab I. So the area has acquired in the course of history two names, which imply, however, fluctuating frontiers. It did not help, moreover, that both designations were adopted inconsistently by Western cartographers and chroniclers.

The modern form of the problem dates from 1812 when traditional Moldavia was partitioned, Russia acquiring the eastern half, between the rivers Prut and the Dniester. This area was then called Bessarabia. This involved giving the whole area the name hitherto connoting its southern districts only. The western half of Moldavia became in due course one of the founding polities of modern Romania.

After the Russian Revolution Bessarabia rejoined (for the Romanians) the state of Romania in 1918, but continued to be called Bessarabia and administered as a distinctive province. The Soviet Government refused to recognise the new frontier and in 1924 created an Autonomous Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (AMSSR) in the south-west Ukraine on the left bank of the Dniester. Of its half million population, only about 30 per cent were Romanians, the other major populations being Ukrainians (about 50 per cent) and Russians (10 per cent).¹ Thus a territory which had never before been called Moldavia nor been part of the medieval principality of Moldavia was created to give credibility to the Soviet Government's claim to Bessarabia and to provide a nucleus for the 'reunification' of the Moldavians on the left bank of the Dniester (in the AMSSR) with those on the right bank (in Bessarabia). The first Soviet Moldavia had come into being.

Almost a month before the announcement of the creation of

¹ The population of the new republic is given in one Romanian source as 545,000 of whom 175,000 (32 per cent) were Moldavians and 250,000 Ukrainians (46 per cent). See E. Diaconescu, *Românii din Basarab, Transnistria, Iasi*, 1942, p. 218. A Soviet Moldavian study gives the percentages of the AMSSR's population in 1940 as 28 per cent Moldavian and 51 per cent Ukrainian. See A. Grecul, *Rastsvet Moldavskoi Sotsi Listicheskoi Natsii*, Kishinev, 1974, p. 86.

the AMSSR, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine charged activists assigned to duties in the embryonic republic with the introduction of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and with the 'development of the national Moldavian language'.² Here for the first time was a signal that the Soviet Government intended to give to ethnic Romanians under its authority a distinct identity from their brothers and sisters in the Romanian national state. The imposition of the Cyrillic alphabet was accompanied by the prescriptive use of the adjective 'Moldavian' to designate the Romanian language.

At face value, this programme accorded with the policies set by the Soviet authorities in the national republics in the 1920s, namely, the cultivation throughout the Union of the native language for use in schools, the media and public life.³ But in the AMSSR, it was different; applying the programme here meant fostering the language of the Ukrainian majority rather than of the Romanian minority. That was scheduled for 'enrichment', in practice a euphemism for the 'Ukrainianisation' of the Moldavian language spoken by the minority. After decades of co-habitation with Ukrainian with no countervailing contacts with the main Romanian culture, the speech of the Moldavians on the left bank of the Dniester had already a pronounced Ukrainian character, both in script and vocabulary. It was the written forms which were manipulated, especially in dictionaries, to show that the Moldavian language was 'independent and distinct from Romanian'. In 1933, compulsory Cyrillic gave way to the use of the Latin alphabet, not for reasons to do with language but for reasons of politics; that is, the need perceived by the Soviet Union to be more conciliatory towards Romania. Tacitly, of course, the change implied the identity of Moldavian with Romanian. This was later repudiated. In 1938, Cyrillic was reintroduced, together with a purge of those who had earlier 'Romanianised' the language. Survivors of the political purges were themselves asked to conduct a linguistic purge, cleansing the Moldavian language of the Gallicised Roman words...which had been introduced by the enemies of

² M. Bruchis, *One step back, two steps forward: On the language policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the National Republics*. Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982, p. 52.

³ J. Pool, 'Soviet language planning: goals, results, options' in J.R. Azrael (ed.), *Soviet nationality policies and practices*, New York: Praeger, 1978, p. 226.

the Moldavian people and...endeavouring to use as many words as possible in Moldavian...such as neologisms from the languages of the fraternal Russian and Ukrainian peoples'.⁴

The cession of Bessarabia in 1940 allowed the Soviets to set up a Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which was reinstated in 1944 after the temporary re-occupation of the territory by Romania. The southern districts, however, went to the Ukraine. The MSSR was re-Communisted and re-Russified; there was mass deportation of ethnic Romanians to Kazakhstan on the one hand and an influx of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians on the other. The ubiquity of Russian and Ukrainian activists in the bureaucracy provided the Soviet authorities with justification for the priority given to Russian in the official life of the Republic. At the same time, the influx of Russians and Ukrainians acted as a check against potential nationalist agitation among the Romanians, now officially Moldavians. Moldavians, the authorities maintained, were different from Romanians, as was their language and culture. This remained the case until the paths of Socialist Romania and the Soviet Union began to diverge in the late 1950s. This development heralded a revival of the Bessarabian question.

In 1964, the Central Committee put Marx into the arena. His *Notes on the Romanians* had been discovered in the Marx-Engels Archive of the International Institute for Social History (IISH) in Amsterdam in December 1957 by Stanislas Schwann, a Polish specialist on Marx. Since they related to Romania, Schwann informed the Institute for the History of the RCP in Bucharest. The director of the IISH in Amsterdam turned down a request in 1958 from Ion Popescu-Puțuri, the head of the Party Institute, for a microfilm of the manuscripts on the grounds that he was preparing an edition of the texts but when Schwann discovered that they in fact contained notes taken by Marx from other publications on social and political conditions in Romania, the Dutch institution lost interest in publication. Popescu-Puțuri, a veteran Communist, was then authorised by the Romanian Party leadership to pay Schwann to continue his research on the texts and to try to persuade the Dutch to publish them. When Schwann failed to make progress, Andrei Oțetea, director of the 'N Iorga' Institute

⁴ Translated from the preface to *Cuvintelnic ortografic moldovenesc*, Tiraspol, 1939, as reproduced in Bruchis, p. 61.

of History in Bucharest, was despatched to Amsterdam in 1960 and signed an agreement with the IISS allowing the Romanians to publish excerpts from the manuscripts.⁵

Almost three years elapsed before the *Notes* were sent to the typesetter. Even allowing for the time necessary to translate Marx's text, the duration of the interval can only be explained by political considerations. Clearly, Dej was holding the text up his sleeve until the occasion was ripe to produce it and this he adjudged to be in the autumn of 1964: to be exact, 24 October, the day it was approved for printing.⁶ The book went on sale in December and its print-run of 20,500 copies was sold out almost immediately, testimony to the feverish interest of the Romanian public in this unprecedented event and the fertile ground of anti-Russian sentiment in which the Romanian regime could cultivate its popularity. By invoking the authority of Marx, the Romanian regime could reconcile a national Communist ideology with the anti-Russian sentiment of most of its subjects. The political motive for publication became evident from the content of the *Notes* themselves and from the introduction to the book by A. Oțetea and G. Zane, a Romanian political economist. The *Notes* were not original writings of Marx but extracts from an unknown work in English and a study in French by Elias Régnauld entitled *Histoire politique et sociale des Principautés Danubiennes* (a Political and Social History of Principalities of the Danube Region), published in Paris in 1855, and Marx only referred marginally to Bessarabia. The editors were at pains to minimise the second-hand nature of Marx's observations and argued that his selection of material and his glosses on it demonstrated clearly his support for Romania's independence in the nineteenth century, underlining Marx's interpretation that neither the Turks nor the Russians had the right in international law to dispose of Romanian territory.⁷

Although incidental, Marx's notes on Bessarabia were forthright and clearly showed his sympathy for Romania's claim to the province. Their publication broke the taboo of speaking openly

⁵ W.P. van Meurs, 'The Bessarabian Question in Communist Historiography', unpubl. Ph. D. thesis, Dept. of History, University of Utrecht, 1993, p. 180.

⁶ This detail, together with the date the text was sent to the type-setter, can be found in the colophon of the book whose Romanian title is K. Marx, *Insemnări despre Români*, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1964.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

about the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and the Romanian identity of its population. The Soviet Union replied in ideological terms. In the revised edition of the official history of the Moldavian SSR, which appeared in 1965, emphasis was placed on the progressive and permanent nature of the Russian annexation of Bessarabia in 1812 as having 'a progressive significance for the population of this region. It was an important turning point in the life of the Moldavian people, who as a result of this historic act, forever linked their future with the fate of their friends, the Great Russian people.'⁸

In defence of their position, Soviet officials drew on the attitude of the RCP toward Bessarabia during the inter-war period, supporting the return of the province to the Soviet Union. The argument was echoed in Soviet Moldavia. In celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the annexation of Bessarabia, the Party journal *Kommunist Moldavii* reproduced a series of articles from inter-war Romanian Communist publications which advocated the return of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union.⁹

Soviet Moldavian reminders of this 'anti-Romanian' line of the RCP were a source of embarrassment to the nationalist credentials which Dej had given the Party and which Ceașescu sought to strengthen. Their effect was to sting Ceașescu into action. Without mentioning Bessarabia by name, Ceașescu's speech of 7 May 1966 on the occasion of the forty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the RCP constituted the strongest and most authoritative claim that Communist Romania had yet made to Bessarabia:

The indications given to the Party to fight for the severance from Romania of some territories which were overwhelmingly inhabited by Romanians did not pay heed to the concrete conditions in Romania – a unitary state. They were deeply erroneous; they actually called for the dismemberment of the national state and the Romanian people's disintegration. The Marxist-Leninist teaching proclaims the right of the peoples to self-determination not with a view to the disintegration of the established national states but, on the contrary, with a view to the liberation of the oppressed peoples and their

⁸ Quoted from King, *Minorities*, p. 229.

⁹ *Ibid.*

constitution into sovereign national states in conformity with the will and decision of the mass of the people.¹⁰

For this he blamed the Comintern.

The sudden and unexpected journey of Leonid Brezhnev to Bucharest only three days after Ceaușescu's speech may have been an indication of how seriously the Soviet leader regarded the Romanian effrontery, especially as the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En-lai was due to visit Bucharest a week later. The Bessarabian issue was covered during the talks and Ceaușescu seems to have agreed to soften his language. While not abandoning his position, Ceaușescu did not express it again so explicitly until the Fourteenth Party Congress in November 1989. On the Soviet side, previous historical arguments underlining the Soviet claim to Bessarabia were repeated in propaganda issued to mark the twenty-sixth anniversary of the 1940 annexation but growing Soviet anxiety about the Moldavian SSR was reflected in a speech delivered by Ivan Bodiul, First Secretary of the Moldavian Communist Party, in February 1967 at a Central Committee plenum. He denounced propaganda which prevented the 'masses' from appreciating the justness of the Moldavian SSR's incorporation into the Soviet Union and attacked 'bourgeois falsifiers of history' and their 'attempts to deny the fact that Bessarabia was amputated from the Soviet Union'. He called upon scholars in the Moldavian SSR 'to find ways to combat and unmask the foreign falsifiers who distort the truth about Bessarabia and to defend actively the interests of the Moldavian people and the unshakeable friendship that has existed for centuries between our people and the Soviet peoples'.¹¹

Bodiul's call was taken up by the Moldavian press and Party officials at a number of public occasions. Specific Romanian publications and historians were singled out for criticism by two historians from Kishinev University, who attacked the Romanian historians Ion Oprea and Ion Popescu-Puțuri for their 'bourgeois' views.¹² This criticism was part of a campaign that reflected increased Soviet concern over nationalist feeling in the Moldavian SSR,

¹⁰ N. Ceaușescu, 1989, vol. 1, p. 345.

¹¹ King, *Minorities*, p. 237.

¹² S.K. Briaskin and M. Sitnik, *Triumful Adevărului Istoric*, Chișinău: Cartea Moldovenească, 1970, p. 4.

expression of which had been voiced during the late 1960s at concerts given by artistic groups from Romania, the most notable being in 1970 at a performance in Kishinev when the visiting dance troupe was acclaimed with shouts of 'Brothers'.¹³ It was also reported that in the autumn of the same year, the walls of the Ministry of the Interior and of the University in Kishinev were daubed with slogans such as 'Russians go home' and 'Moldavia for the Moldavians'.¹⁴

The low point in the conflict between Soviet and Romanian historians over Bessarabia was reached with the publication in 1974 in Russian of a lengthy polemical work entitled *Moldavian Soviet Statehood and the Bessarabian Question* by A.M. Lazarev, a Russian from Bessarabia.¹⁵ As Rector of Kishinev University and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Moldavian SSR, Lazarev's political as well as academic credentials gave an authority to the book which aspired to be the final word on the history of Bessarabia. While concentrating on the period from 1918 to the present, Lazarev traced the birth of the Moldavian 'nation' to the emergence of the principality of Moldavia in the fourteenth century and in doing so, made a crude attempt to argue that because the Moldavians speak a language 'independent' of Romanian and have a historical tradition 'distinct' from that of the Romanians of Wallachia and Transylvania, they are therefore not Romanians. The corollary to this assertion, which was hinted at by Lazarev, was that the aspirations of the Moldavians had only been partially fulfilled since it was only the eastern half of the former Moldavian principality, Bessarabia, that had been incorporated into the Soviet Union. In other words, Moldavia on the west bank of the river Prut was considered by Lazarev as an irredenta of the Moldavian SSR.

In arguing that the Moldavians were not Romanians, Lazarev was forced to rewrite the history of the Romanians by distorting their ethnic origins. He supported his argument with semantic

¹³ Nicholas Dima, *Bessarabia and Bukovina: The Soviet-Romanian Territorial Dispute*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982, p. 53.

¹⁴ *New York Times*, 6 November 1970, quoted from Dima, p. 53.

¹⁵ Lazarev, *Moldavskaya Sovetskaya Gosudarstvenost' i Bessarabskiy Vopros*, Kishinev: Izdatelstvo Kartya Moldovenyaskie, 1974. It was reviewed in detail in J. Gold, 'Bessarabia: The Thorny 'Non-Existent' Problem', *East European Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Spring 1979), pp. 47-74.

sophistry by claiming that the name 'Romania' and the concepts 'Romanian people' and 'Romanian language' had validity only after the union in 1859 of Moldavia and Wallachia as the United Principalities, without mentioning the fact that the early Moldavian chroniclers recognized the ethnic relationship of the Romanians of Wallachia, Transylvania and Moldavia by considering them to be 'one and the same people, Romanians'.¹⁶

To support his claim of a separate identity for the Romanians in Moldavia, Lazarev asserted that their native tongue was not Romanian but Moldavian, which was as distinct from Romanian as is Portuguese.¹⁷ As one Western reviewer of the book commented, scholars are likely to remain sceptical about the existence of an independent Moldavian language until such time as a Romanian-Moldavian dictionary is produced.¹⁸

For Soviet-Romanian relations, it was not the clumsy artificiality of Lazarev's contentions but the vehemence of his attack on pre-Communist Romania and on Romanian historiography, including that of the post-1965 period, that caused the greatest irritation. Here Lazarev surpassed himself:

Bessarabia's seizure by bourgeois Romania in 1918 is an indisputable fact. This is the most shameful page in the history of royalist Romania. Any other evaluation of this anti-Soviet action is incompatible with the historical truth.¹⁹

Romanian historians were warned that 'no matter for how many years they should assert that Moldavians are Romanians, Moldavians

¹⁶ Miron Costin (1633-91) says in the preface to his study of the Moldavians entitled *De Neamul Moldovenilor* that he had undertaken to show the origins of the 'inhabitants of our land, Moldavia, and so too of those of Wallachia, as mentioned above, and of the Romanians of Transylvania, for they are all the same one people and settled in these lands at the same time' M. Costin, *Opere alese* in L. Onu (ed.), Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1967, p. 133.

¹⁷ Lazarev, *op. cit.*, p. 739.

¹⁸ Gold, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁹ There were echoes here of the language of a history of northern Bukovina published in the Ukrainian SSR in 1969. The Romanian annexation of northern Bukovina in 1918 is qualified as follows: 'Having grabbed Bukovina, the Romanian occupiers instituted a savage regime of terror, economic and political oppression.' V. Kurylo *et al.*, *Pivnichna Bukovyna, ii mynule i suchasne*, Uzhorod: Karpaty, 1969, p. 92.

will never and in no way become Romanians, while Soviet Moldavia will never become Romanian territory'.²⁰

Lazarev's position in presenting the history of Bessarabia since 1812 was summed up thus:

Romania as a state (together with its official name, which reflects its international legal status) appeared on the map of Europe long after Bessarabia became part of Russia. The attempt by Romanian bourgeois historians to give retrospectively a wider meaning to the terms 'Romania' and 'the Romanian people', and to use them to refer to foreign territories and foreign peoples was not only a concrete example of historical falsification but also the expression of the aggressive tendencies of the ruling classes in the Kingdom of Romania.²¹

No less a person than Ceașescu took up the gauntlet thrown down by Lazarev. In a speech delivered on 28 March 1975, he referred obliquely to Lazarev's distortions by maintaining that 'the division of states and the arbitrary division of peoples are presented as expressions of certain historical needs, while the results of such artificially created situations are rationalised and interpreted as a natural process of forming distinct nations'.²²

Shortly afterwards, a new museum of national history opened with prominently displayed maps of Romania showing Bessarabia and northern Bukovina as part of the national territory. In the following year, two members of the Party's Institute of Historical Studies produced a work on Romanian politics between 1918 and 1921 in which they referred to Bessarabia as 'this ancient Romanian territory'.²³ However, the Romanian leader was careful to avoid criticising the Soviet Moldavian historian directly and his caution set the tone for the muted response to the work in Romania. Instead, Ceașescu authorised *Asociația României*, the government-sponsored association for relations with the émigré community, to distribute a complete Romanian translation of Lazarev's.

²⁰ Lazarev, *op. cit.*, p. 801.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 531.

²² Quoted from R.R. King, 'The Escalation of Rumanian-Soviet Historical Polemics over Bessarabia', *RFE Research, Romania: Background Report* no. 28 (12 February 1976), p. 6.

²³ M. Mușat and I. Ardeleanu, *Viața Politică în România, 1918-1921*, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976, p. 10, note 4.

work with the request that it be reviewed as widely as possible in Western publications. It was also outside Romania that the propaganda section of the Central Committee arranged for the publication of the regime's official response to the book. Writing under the pseudonym of Petre Moldoveanu, Constantin Giurescu, the most distinguished Romanian historian at the time, was asked to produce a polemical pamphlet refuting Lazarev's claims. Entitled *How to Falsify History*, it was printed in Milan by Constantin Drăgan, an Italian millionaire of Romanian origin, under the imprint of his publishing house Nagard (Drăgan spelt backwards) in 1975.

In Soviet Moldavia itself, reviewers gave an uncritical validation of Lazarev's views, with one sycophant even hailing the book as 'a major contribution to Soviet historiography'.²⁴ This sparring over Bessarabia continued throughout 1975 and was fuelled by the rehabilitation of Marshal Ion Antonescu, the wartime dictator who had led Romanian forces in the joint attack with Germany upon the Soviet Union in 1941 in the hope of regaining Bessarabia. Previously regarded as a taboo figure, Antonescu's success in reconquering Bessarabia and northern Bukovina was judged by the propaganda section of the Romanian Central Committee to be too sensitive a subject to be treated in a work of history, and therefore the Marshal's re-entry into the public domain was entrusted to a novelist, Marin Preda (1922-80). In *Delirul* (Delirium) Antonescu is presented as a tragic figure who sees Romania's only hope of retrieving Bessarabia in an alliance with Germany. For a Romanian public starved of all but Communist propaganda about Antonescu, the novel was like a breath of fresh air and its print-run of 35,000 copies sold out immediately. The partial vindication of the Marshal was roundly condemned in the Moscow *Literaturnaia gazeta*, and as a result Preda was instructed by the Central Committee to produce a revised edition, giving more emphasis to the struggle against Fascism in Romania during the war. This edition had a print-run of 100,000 copies.²⁵

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Romanian authorities refused to let the problem of Bessarabia fade into silence.

²⁴ M. Sitnik, review in *Codri*, no. 12 (1974), p. 137.

²⁵ D. Deletant, 'Literature and Society in Romania since 1948' in G.A. Hosking and G.F. Cushing (ed.), *Perspectives on Literature and Society in Eastern and Western Europe*, London: Macmillan, 1989, p. 145.

In 1983 a historical atlas appeared with maps showing Bessarabia as part of Romania between 1918 and 1940, with one indicating the areas annexed by the Soviet Union 'in the autumn of 1940'.²⁶ But by this time the efficacy for Ceaușescu of playing the nationalist card had virtually vanished. In the face of the severe austerity measures which Ceaușescu had introduced in order to pay off the country's foreign debt which had risen to 10 billion dollars at the end of 1981, most Romanians began to ask whether autonomy was worth the price. The question was put even more frequently after Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet party leader in March 1985.

By the time Gorbachev visited Romania in May 1987, a remarkable about-turn had occurred in Romanians' perception of the Soviet Union and its relationship to Romania. This change in attitude hinged on the evolution of Ceaușescu himself: if, in 1965, Ceaușescu had presented a young, dynamic face of Communism compared with the ageing, reactionary Brezhnev, now, thirty years later, it was Gorbachev who had assumed Ceaușescu's mantle and the latter that of Brezhnev. In a speech broadcast live during his visit to Bucharest on 26 May 1987, Gorbachev presented to the Romanian public his concepts of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and in so doing offered an implicit criticism of Ceaușescu's resistance to reform. Several of this author's closest Romanian friends admitted that, in the wake of Gorbachev's visit, they would prefer rule from Moscow to that from Bucharest and the enthusiasm for reform could be seen in the queues that formed in July 1988 in front of the Aeroflot offices in Bucharest, as Romanians were admitted five at a time not to purchase airline tickets but to pick up free copies in Romanian of the Soviet leader's report to the Nineteenth Conference of the Soviet Communist Party, coverage of which had been restricted in the Romanian media to those measures which had already been taken in Romania.²⁷ Here was yet another irony of Ceaușescu's continued rule: the arch-nationalist had succeeded in making Romanians look to the Soviet Union for hope!

Ceaușescu's irritation with the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*

²⁶ *Atlas pentru istoria României*, Bucharest: Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1983, nos 65-7, 73.

²⁷ *Cea de-a XIX-a Conferință Unională a PCUS. Documente și Materiale*. Moscow: Novosti, 1988.

soon left an echo in the pseudo-historical writings of his brother, Lieut. Gen. Ilie Ceaușescu. An attack in an article by the general in the April 1989 issue of *Lupta Intregului Popor* on ideological 'revisionism', i.e. on *glasnost* and *perestroika*, was equated with the territorial 'revisionism' practised by Hungary and the Soviet Union in 1940 against Romania. The Soviet ultimatum of 26 June 1940 forced Romania to 'surrender the territory between the Prut and the Dniester and the northern part of Bukovina, which were incorporated into the Soviet Union'.²⁸ Nicolae Ceaușescu revived the parallel, although in a slightly different form, in his address to the Fourteenth Party Congress of 20 November 1989. In the process of reform, concessions had been made, he argued, to the 'international class enemy' (capitalism) which had led to the 'de-ideologisation' of international relations and the emergence of a new 'international imperialism'. These concessions were similar to those made by the Soviet Union to Germany in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, to which Ceaușescu alluded without mentioning it by name:

One must never forget the lessons of history and the fact that Hitlerite Germany was encouraged to unleash the Second World War by the policy of concessions to Nazi Germany... We must never forget that the pact between Hitlerite Germany and the Soviet Union did not eliminate the threat [of war]... Romania believes, therefore, that one must move to adopt [all] necessary measures for the solution of the problems that are still spending. Primarily it is necessary to adopt a clear and unequivocal position condemning and annulling all accords with Hitlerite Germany by drawing practical conclusions for cancelling the consequences of all these pacts and diktats.²⁹

In calling for the reversal of the consequences of these pacts, Ceaușescu was, in fact, arguing for the return of Bessarabia to Romania. The Soviet reaction was, in the words of a TASS commentator, that 'no serious or responsible politician' could raise

²⁸ Shafir, ' "Revisionism" under Romanian General's Fire: Ceaușescu's Brother Attacks Hungarian Positions', *RFE Research, Background Report/86* (17 May 1989), p. 4.

²⁹ Quoted from M. Shafir, 'Highlights of the 14th Party Congress', *RFE Research, Romanian SR /9* (14 December 1989), p. 30.

the issue of the post-war borders, 'including the Soviet border with Romania'.³⁰

Yet behind Ceașescu's obvious attempt to appeal once again to Romanian nationalist sentiment, there lay an anxiety about possible Soviet intervention in Romania's internal affairs. In a speech to the heads of the North and South American delegations on the eve of the Congress, Ceașescu referred to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact explicitly this time and expressed fear of a new agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union 'to the detriment of other peoples'. The forthcoming Malta summit between President Bush and General Secretary Gorbachev was seen by Ceașescu as a second Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, at the hands of which Romania would again suffer, for in his own self-centred view of international affairs, the two superpowers had nothing better to do than to plot his own downfall. Ceașescu's remarks were meant as a warning to Gorbachev not to interfere in Romania; they had been strengthened by the ending of a Romanian news blackout on the growth of the nationalist movement in the Moldavian SSR only a few days earlier.³¹

Barely a month after these words, Ceașescu fell, thus feeding the rumour mill in Romania that he had indeed been the victim of the American-Soviet plot which he had predicted. He was overthrown at the very height of the national revival in Moldavia, which the nationalist in him could only have looked upon with joy but which the Communist in him could not fail to regard with mixed feelings. The movement for national emancipation in Moldavia could not have emerged without the application of those very policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* to which he was so resolutely opposed in his own country. In the exuberance generated by the Romanian Revolution, calls for the union of Moldavia with Romania came from both sides of the River Prut but in Moldavia itself, that newly-expressed nationalism, which initially was distinctly Romanian in character, has, since the declaration of independence in August 1991 of the re-named Moldova, assumed a Moldovan one. Acceptance of the latter proposition may, paradoxically, seem to be a validation of Soviet efforts to give a distinct identity to the Romanians of Moldova since their

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

annexation of the republic in 1940 and those who attempt to develop a Moldovan self-consciousness may have to fall back on Soviet interpretations of the history and culture of the Moldovans. A resurrection of some aspects of the Soviet Communist view of Moldova's past and a concomitant Romanian reaction to it reminiscent of Ceaușescu may yet occur.

6

COMPLIANCE

Ceaușescu's tactic of winning support for his regime from historians was equally efficacious when applied to writers.¹ The corollary of Ceaușescu's achievement in this respect was a virtual absence of intellectual dissent or, in other words, a monotonous compliance by intellectuals with the regime. Some Romanian *émigrés* and Western observers have sought an explanation for this compliance or acquiescence in the Romanians' past, in the long-entrenched Romanian tradition of dissimulation under the Ottomans and in the deep-rooted practices of corruption, nepotism and bribery.² They also point to the absence of a focal point for opposition in post-war Romania. Other analysts, and these include native Romanian writers themselves, ascribed this compliance to opportunism. The prospect of financial and material gain through accommodating oneself with the regime proved irresistible to many individuals and the resulting prevalence of opportunism amongst creative intellectuals was recognised by the poet Ana Blandiana as a blight on Romanian society and culture.³

However, the blandness of dissent amongst the creative intelligentsia is merely one aspect of the compliance which characterised the Ceaușescu era. The reasons for this docility on the part of intellectuals must be examined in the context of the relative absence of major challenges. The Ceaușescu period was marked

¹ The degree to which Ceaușescu succeeded in mobilising support for his regime from cultural intellectuals and the reasons for that success have been stimulatingly analysed by Katherine Verdery in her profoundly original study of identity and cultural politics entitled *National Ideology Under Socialism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

² Șafir, *Romania: Politics...*, p. 146.

³ When asked what she despised, Ana Blandiana replied 'Opportunism'. See the anonymous article 'Un chestionar pentru Ana Blandiana', *Cartea Românească*, Exemplar de Semnal, no. 2 (1984), p. 11.

not solely by the weakness of intellectual dissent but also by the lack of significant dissent from any quarter, with the exception of the Jiu Valley strike of 1977 and the Braşov riot of 1987. The attitude of many Romanians has been summed up by a young theatre director in 1988:

What most people want to do under a dictatorship is to forget about it, get on with their lives and enjoy themselves as best they can. Thus when Romanian TV was reduced to four hours of transmission per day in 1984, many citizens of Bucharest and the major cities acquired video recorders and cassettes with Western films. The import of these items was not banned, probably because amongst the users were Party and DSS officials who did not alert Ceauşescu to the trend.

Any analysis of compliance under Ceauşescu must also consider the condition of the rural and urban workers, of the technical intelligentsia of engineers, economists and managers and of the Church. Although the Romanian urban worker had a lower standard of living than his Hungarian or Polish counterpart, it was higher than that of a Romanian villager or peasant. Given the fact that in the early 1980s, over 60 per cent of the urban workforce in Romania came originally from villages, the point of comparison for industrial workers was their birthplace. Wage differentials between the agricultural and urban sectors remained considerable throughout the Ceauşescu period. In 1965, the wages of a villager working on a co-operative or state farm were only half of the average income; while they had risen by 1979 to 66 per cent of the average industrial wage, there was still obviously a marked discrepancy. As a result, a low status was associated with agricultural labour, which in its turn prompted migration to the towns and the factory. At the same time, this low status generated low expectations.⁴ With low expectations went a suspicion of authority and a conviction of impotence.⁵ These attitudes were inherited by those industrial workers who originated from the village. The significance of this peasant background in determining the outlook of industrial workers was highlighted by the calculation in 1982 that almost 30 per cent of Romania's urban workforce commuted

⁴ Shafir, *Romania: Politics...*, pp. 140-1.

⁵ *Ibid.*

from the village. Such a high proportion of commuting workers led to the creation of a semi-urban society in which the village and the ritual of the Orthodox Church remained very strong and around which family reunions and feast days were celebrated.⁶

The conviction of impotence which field work by Western scholars on the Romanian peasantry revealed merits closer examination for an understanding of compliance towards the Ceaușescu regime. The proverb '*capul plecat nici sabia nu-l taie*' ('the sword will not sever a bowed head') is often invoked as emblematic of Romanians' attitude to authority. This submissiveness can be derived from what the Romanian philosopher Mircea Vulcănescu called 'the Romanian dimension of existence', characterised by its fatalism.⁷ This acceptance of fate, which is determined by a belief in a spiritual eternity, can be equated in a political context with an acquiescence to temporal authority and recognition of the futility of resisting it.

A consequence of the massive drive to industrialise under Dej had been the creation of what might be termed a middle class of technicians, scientists and economic managers. The ability of the new class to articulate a group interest was linked to the degree to which the Party leadership was prepared to relax its monopoly of central planning and to introduce a measure of managerial autonomy, as the New Economic Mechanism in Hungary was to show in 1968. However, Ceaușescu abandoned any such reformist ideas he may have had in 1967.⁸ The Central Committee's rigid control over central planning was maintained, suffocating any collective voice that the technocrats might have found in influencing policy. Ceaușescu's failure to reform therefore prevented any move towards market Socialism or the development of any political constituency within the Party which a more pluralistic economic approach might have spawned.

⁶ J.W. Cole, 'Family, farm and factory: rural workers in contemporary Romania' in D. Nelson (ed.), *Romania in the 1980s*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1981, p. 91.

⁷ M. Vulcănescu, 'The Romanian Dimension of Existence: A Phenomenological Sketch', *Romanian Sources*, vol. 1, part I (1975), pp. 5-34. This is an abridged version of the original Romanian text which was published in the author's *Izvoare de filosofie*, Bucharest, 1943. Vulcănescu was to become a victim of the Communist regime for he was arrested in 1948 and died in prison in October 1952.

⁸ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*: ..., pp. 109-13.

The stifling of the technocracy left the creative intelligentsia in the forefront of public life as a consequence of the emphasis which Ceaușescu decided to give to appeals to national symbols and to his own importance. Ironically, it was the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 which allowed Ceaușescu to discover that appeals to national sentiment were an efficient mechanism of social control and personal dictatorship. The huge rally in Bucharest on 21 August and its acclamation of Ceaușescu's denunciation of the invasion proved to be his finest hour. It left an indelible mark upon him and whetted an appetite for the excesses of the personality cult. Significantly, Ceaușescu's defiance on that day also prompted several prominent writers to join the RCP. Their action shows how superficial it would be to dismiss all postures of writers as being dictated by opportunism or self-interest. Occasionally, creative intellectuals in Romania did act from deep conviction but the adulation of the Romanian leader expressed at various times by most writers, artists and journalists shows that principled motivation was the exception.

In this sense, there can be no doubt that during the period of Communist rule, many creative intellectuals served the Party and the Ceaușescu dictatorship. Yet this is also true of the technical intellectuals or technocrats. Just as very few doctors refused to conduct the psychiatric abuse of dissidents and a pitifully small number of engineers and architects refrained from implementing the policies of systematisation, so too did few writers and artists picture the hell rather than the utopia of Communism. To have done otherwise would, of course, have invited immediate persecution by the regime and when unflattering comparisons are made between the activities of intellectuals in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland with those of their counterparts in Romania, it is easy to overlook the repressive nature of the Ceaușescu regime.

That said, the proclamation of the Romanian People's Republic on 30 December 1947 marked the beginning of an era in which the leadership of the RCP sought to and to a large degree succeeded in exploiting literature for its own ends. The measure of that success was reflected in the form and content of literature published until the overthrow of Ceaușescu.⁹ Since it was to creative

⁹ The relationship between the Party and writers during much of this period has

intellectuals that the Party assigned the role of socializing the soul of the people, with the concomitant material rewards, the ranks of committed Communists among writers, such as Geo Bogza and Sașa Pană, were suddenly swelled by others holding established left-wing views. Among them were the critic George Călinescu and the novelist Mihail Sadoveanu. They were joined shortly after the imposition of the Soviet puppet government of Petru Groza in March 1945 by respected pre-war figures, such as novelists Camil Petrescu and Cezar Petrescu and the poet Victor Eftimiu, whose implied validation of Groza's 'popular front' cultural policies offered these policies a veneer of respectability.¹⁰

Some established writers resisted the blandishments of the Communists. The poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga paid the price of his refusal to accept the new educational reform of 1948 by being removed from his chair at Cluj University and excluded from public life for the rest of his days. Even Tudor Arghezi, an outstanding poet of the pre-war period with left-wing sympathies, found himself out of tune with the literary method imported from the Soviet Union in 1948, known as Socialist Realism. His poetry was the subject of an attack launched in *Scînteia* by Sorin Toma, who claimed:

The ideological content of Arghezi's poetry (dissatisfaction with life, disgust and hatred towards man, pessimism, mysticism, the cultivation of everything morbid, the quest for death) has nothing original or national in it. In the period of the imperialist monopolies, this ideological content represents the standard goods on the world scale of decadent bourgeois art.¹¹

been discussed by Anneli Ute Gabanyi in her study *Partei und Literatur in Rumänien seit 1945*, Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1975. Writers largely acquiesced in the Party's cultural policies. There were exceptions, notably Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Dumitru Țepeneag, Paul Goma, Augustin Buzura, Marin Preda, Ana Blandiana, Mircea Dinescu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș and Marin Sorescu.

¹⁰ Examples of opportunism, dissimulation and conformity in Romanian society are provided by Michael Shafir, *Romania Politics...*, pp. 58, 127-50. The essence of dissimulation is encapsulated in Arghezi's aphorism, offered as a comment on a speech by the 'old guard' Stalinist writer, Zaharia Stancu (noted for his weakness for Western cigarettes), that 'what we preach isn't what we smoke' (*una vorbim și alta fumăm*). This is quoted by Shafir (p. 58). Călinescu stood in the elections of 1946 as a Popular Front candidate.

¹¹ *Scînteia*, 5, 7, 8, 10 January 1948. Quoted from Doina Grăsoiu, *Bătălia Arghezi*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1984, pp. 154-5. Another casualty of the new literary

The most significant recruit to Socialist Realism was the established writer Mihail Sadoveanu, whose novel *Mitrea Cocor* describes the travail of a Romanian peasant who, captured as a soldier in the Soviet Union, awakens to revolutionary consciousness of the class struggle and to the lies put about at home by anti-Soviet propaganda. Peasants in Soviet collective farms are happier and better off than he was. He enlists in a unit of Romanian volunteers to join at the side of Soviet soldiers in the struggle to overthrow the oppressors in Romania.¹²

Failure to conform to the method invited problems with the censorship body, the Directorate of Press and Printing (*Direcția generală a presei și a tipăriturilor*), even for those who enjoyed the favour of the regime. George Călinescu, an eminent literary critic who was appointed director of the Institute of Literary History and Folklore in 1949, was unable to publish his novel *Bietul Ioanide* (Poor Ioanide), which he had begun in 1947, until six years later. On publication, it received a hostile press for what was regarded as excessive candidness in its portrayal of the different reactions from a number of intellectuals to the rise of right-wing movements in pre-war Romania. Yet the fact that the novel appeared in 1953 was indicative of an indulgence, manifest after Stalin's death, towards literature that did not quite conform to the canons of Socialist Realism.

The period from 1948 to 1953 had been characterised by the publication in Romanian translation of what may be considered Russian examples of the genre, such as Gor'kii's *Mat* (Mother) and Sholokhov's *Podmiataia tselina* (Virgin soil upturned), leavened by native contributions, of which *Mitrea Cocor* and the poetry of Mihai Beniuc, Dan Deșliu and Eugen Jebeleanu are indicative. Speeches at the Party Congress of 1953 called for a renunciation of dogmatism and Zaharia Stancu, the President of the Writers' Union, suggested the re-publication of the 'classics' of Romanian nineteenth-century literature and even of works from the inter-war

norms was the young Nina Cassian, whose volume of poetry *La scara 1/1* ('On the scale 1/1') was criticised in *Sânțtea* by Traian Șelmaru as 'unprincipled', that is, failing to reflect Marxist-Leninist principles. Cassian was forced to make a self-criticism in the weekly journal *Flacăra*, 7 March 1948.

¹² M. Sadoveanu, *Mitrea Cocor*, Bucharest: Editura de Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă (ESPLA), 1949.

years by Camil Petrescu, Cezar Petrescu, Liviu Rebreanu and Vasile Voiculescu.¹³ After some hesitation, a concession to the latter generation was made in 1955. Tudor Arghezi was able to publish *1907*, a collection of verse dedicated to the peasant uprisings of that year in Wallachia. This event was politically significant for the breach that it represented in the official attitude towards writers previously considered 'bourgeois' and 'decadent'.

This intellectual malleability masked a latent nationalism that the Party was to exploit fully in its clash with the Soviet Union over Comecon in the early 1960s. By drawing upon the inherent anti-Russian sentiment of the population, the RCP sought to move from reliance upon the Soviet Union to support from within Romania for its authority. Dej distanced himself further from his overlord by reversing the trend of Russianisation in Romanian culture and education. The Russian Institute in Bucharest was closed and to many of the city's streets which had been given Russian names were restored their original Romanian ones. These measures signalled a de-Stalinisation of Romanian cultural policies that ushered in the rehabilitation of historical, political and literary figures who were prominent in the nineteenth-century movement for independence.¹⁴

Contacts with the West were developed, exemplified by the visit of the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964, and these had a leavening effect on cultural life. In literature, the most significant act of rehabilitation was that of the critic and aesthete Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917) in 1963. He was an advocate of art for art's sake and a repudiator of the social role of art; his re-admittance into the public arena marked the abandonment by the Party of Socialist Realism as its aesthetic creed. This rejection paved the way for the restoration in 1964 of outstanding Romanian writers of the nineteenth century to their respected place in Romanian culture and for the rehabilitation of a number of twentieth-century authors who had remained under a cloud because of their association either with 'undemocratic forces' or with 'decadent' literary movements or because they had simply refused to compromise themselves by accepting the tenets of Socialist Realism.

¹³ Grăsoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

¹⁴ For example, Nicolae Bălcescu (1819-52) and Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817-91).

Of greater importance for the future of Romanian literature was the emergence, permitted by this relaxation of rigid ideological control, of a clutch of writers, principally poets, from the post-war generation: Ioan Alexandru, Ana Blandiana, Marin Sorescu and Nichita Stănescu. They were accompanied in their debuts by a number of older colleagues, 'the lost generation' who had written for the desk-drawer only during the 1950s: Ion Caraion, Geo Dumitrescu and Ștefan Augustin Doinaș. Both groups injected a measure of refreshing nonconformism into contemporary literature by launching themselves into a revitalisation of Romanian verse in which each poet sought to give his or her own vision of the world. In the confessional verse of Blandiana, some critics detected an example offered by Nicolae Labiș (1935-56) with his credo 'the struggle against inertia',¹⁵ an attitude explicable as a desire to break free from the ideological clichés of the 1950s. This led some observers to see a sinister hand behind his death under the wheels of a Bucharest tram in 1956.

The significance of the 'thaw' lies as much in its genesis as in its effect on Romanian literature. It resulted not from an attack on established ideological principles or from intellectual pressure but from the changes in the political relationship between Romania and the Soviet Union triggered off by the Comecon crisis. The concessions to writers were 'granted by the regime rather than wrested from it' and were awarded by Dej when his authority in the RWP was undisputed.¹⁶ It is myopic to see the 'thaw' as a sign of weakness on the part of the Party. The process of de-Stalinisation was firmly controlled by the Party and never jeopardised its primacy in the country. Dej's supremacy was mirrored in the smoothness with which his designated successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu, took over the reins of power.

The compliance which had characterised relations between the creative intelligentsia and the Party under Dej continued undisturbed after Ceaușescu's election as First Secretary in March 1965. This was largely due to the popularity of the anti-Soviet stance, which the new leader developed into a national and nationalist brand of Marxism. A feature of this was the importance given

¹⁵ Ion Pop, *Poezia unei generații*, Cluj: Dacia, 1973, p. 26.

¹⁶ M. Lovinescu, 'The New Wave of Rumanian Writers', *East Europe*, vol. 16, no. 12 (December 1967), p. 9.

to the nation in a Socialist society, which found expression in Ceaușescu's report to the Ninth Congress of the RCP on 19 July 1965: 'For a long time to come, the nation and state will continue to be the basis of the development of Socialist society. The development of the nation, the consolidation of the socialist state, comply with the objective requirements of social life.'¹⁷

The role assigned to literature in society was to continue 'shaping the new man's Socialist consciousness' by employing a new method: 'deep-going Socialist humanism should pervade literary and artistic creation, which mirrors the Party's policy and activity devoted to the prosperity of our homeland, to the people's welfare and man's happiness.'¹⁸

The Party was depicted as leading the nation through Socialism towards the fulfilment of its aspirations. By arguing that the Party represented the entire nation, Ceaușescu could claim legitimacy for the Party and for himself as the defenders of the national interest. The corollary of this was that any criticism of the Party or its leader from Romanians, whether inside or outside the country, could be branded as treachery to the nation, a charge that was to be levelled in the early 1970s against dissenting voices, in particular Paul Goma. In a similar vein, pressure for internal change could be resisted by raising the spectre of threats to the nation from abroad, thus playing on the traditional dislike of the Soviet Union. Such tactics had the merit of diverting dissatisfaction with the Party's policies into support for the regime and were employed with success, particularly in the columns of the weeklies *Flacăra* (The Flame) and *Săptămîna* (The Week), edited respectively by Adrian Păunescu (from 1973) and Eugen Barbu (from 1970).

The stress placed on the nation in Ceaușescu's report was reflected in cultural developments by the search to identify the *specificul național* (national characteristic) of Romanian culture.¹⁹ Yet not all writers were mesmerised by the insistence upon the 'national identity' and 'the organic unity of the Romanians' in literary and historical publications.²⁰ In 1966, an attempt was made

¹⁷ Quoted from G. Schöpflin, 'Rumanian Nationalism', *Survey*, nos 2-3 (Spring-Summer 1974), p. 92. See also *Sănteia*, 20 July 1965.

¹⁸ N. Ceaușescu, *Romania: ...*, vol. 1, p. 89.

¹⁹ Gabanyi, p. 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

by Miron Radu Paraschivescu (1911–71) to increase the number of aesthetic criteria admitted by the Party ideologists. On 15 May 1965, Paraschivescu took over the correspondence column of the literary monthly *Ramuri* (Branches), published in Craiova. Eleven months later to the day, he succeeded in transforming the column into a four-page literary supplement with the title *Povestea Vorbii* (The Tale of Talk).²¹ The supplement was host to a number of writers who, in most cases, found great difficulty in getting into print, an observation made at the time by the Bucharest weekly *Luceafărul* (The Evening Star).²² Its second claim to nonconformity was Paraschivescu's assertion, in the first editorial, that he: 'represented a group having precise values and intellectual affinities that differ from those of other journals. The essential point is that this group should not remain a closed shop but should be enriched continually by new works and new authors without deviating at all from its general orientation and renouncing its characteristics.'

The editor assumed the responsibility for the literature published in the supplement, which would be 'a veritable agora where the most conflicting of opinions could be openly exchanged, a sort of typographical Hyde Park where the spirit of spontaneity and not that of uniformity is abroad'.

A third feature of the supplement's existence was that Paraschivescu gave his services without remuneration, as was done by all the authors whom he published. The bonds linking editor and contributor were thus spiritual and not commercial – a phenomenon that explains the continued solidarity of the group after *Povestea Vorbii*'s suppression. At the core of the group, apart from Paraschivescu himself, stood the poets Leonid Dimov and Virgil Mazilescu, and the prose writers Iulian Neașcu, Sînzeana Pop and Dumitru Țepeneag.

The emphasis placed by Paraschivescu upon aesthetic values to the exclusion of political dogma as criteria for publication exceeded the regime's limits of tolerance. The principal charge levelled at the journal was its failure to reflect the *specificul național*. Adoption of this nationalist-inspired criterion thus became a litmus test of allegiance to the regime's cultural ideology. Refusal to

²¹ For this account of *Povestea Vorbii*, I am indebted to Gabanyi, *op. cit.* pp. 145–7.

²² *Luceafărul*, no. 20 (14 May 1965).

accept it could constitute grounds for banishment from the literary establishment. The campaign of opposition to *Povestea Vorbiei*, orchestrated by the Party and voiced in *Luceafărul* and the weekly *Contemporanul*, led to its suppression in December 1966 but the leavening experience of the journal's nine-month existence was to leave its mark. In the vanguard of outspoken authors who raised their voices in 1968 were several of Parascăvescu's young protégés.

The events of Czechoslovakia during the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 elicited a sympathetic response from the Party, since they conformed with the Romanian advocacy of the view that each Communist regime was entitled to determine its own policies without outside interference, a view made explicit since the Com-econ clash. In public statements and speeches, such as that made by Ceașescu at the plenary session of the Central Committee of March 1968, this view was reiterated: 'No one can claim a monopoly of absolute truth as regards the development of social life and no one can claim to have the last word in the realm of practice as well as in social and philosophical thought.'²³

However, one must be cautious not to draw too close a parallel between the Czech and Romanian experience of early 1968. None of the internal reforms emanating from the Party, for example, the return to the pre-Communist division of the country into counties and the restructuring of education, weakened its leading role to any degree. This is not to deny that a measure of 'liberalisation' was admitted by the Party. Indeed, Ceașescu invited intellectuals in the same March speech to participate in a discussion about political life in Romania in which they should not show 'the slightest apprehension or reserve in public debates about internal politics'.²⁴ The implications of this invitation for literature were spelt out by the journalist Paul Anghel in two articles which appeared in *Gazeta literară*, the mouthpiece of the Writers' Union on 28 March and 4 April:

Without departing from goals established *a priori*, the writer can, like the scientist, participate in the process of the search for the truth and prove the existence of a precise phenomenon but more than that, he has the duty to tell us what exactly

²³ Gabanyi, p. 148.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

reality is and not how it ought to be or how he would like it to be.²⁵

Of equal importance for writers and intellectuals was the plenary meeting on 25 April 1968 of the Central Committee at which Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, executed in 1954, was rehabilitated and the abuses of the Minister of the Interior at the time, Alexandru Drăghici, condemned. Commenting on both decisions, the Party ideologue Mihnea Gheorghiu recognised that 'these abuses had been the cause of restraints which were harmful and dangerous for artistic creation and intellectual movements'.²⁶

The articles by Anghel and Gheorghiu were symptomatic of the vitality of literary debate engendered by Party pronouncements. A relaxation of censorship was evident from the thematic diversity of the literature which now surfaced. The drama *Iona* (Jonah) by Marin Sorescu was published in 1968 and performed to packed houses for a brief period in that year and in January 1969.²⁷ Jonah, in the belly of a whale, cuts himself out only to find that the first whale had been swallowed by a second. Escaping from the second whale, he finds himself in the belly of a third. The fisherman's predicament is the occasion for profound observations about human existence, expressed in a simple, colloquial language. Some critics have interpreted the whale's belly as a symbol for the cosmos, others as intra-uterine loneliness. Jonah may also be seen as a prisoner of convention. Clearly, his escape from captivity by committing suicide did not strike the optimistic note of Socialist Humanism, in which 'the people's welfare and man's happiness' were to be echoed. After 1969, the play was staged only once in Romania, in 1982, and then by a group of South American students working at the Bucharest Institute of Dramatic Art.

Marin Preda's *Intrusul* (The Intruder) gave an exceptionally realistic portrayal of a young man unable to adapt to the new morality of contemporary urban society, in which the novelist

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Luceafărul*, no. 17 (27 April 1968). See Gabanyi, p. 149.

²⁷ M. Sorescu, *Iona*, Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură. It was translated into English as one of a trilogy of Sorescu's plays in *The Thirst of the Salt Mountain*, translated by A. Deletant and B. Walker, London: Forest Books, 1985.

sees a corruption of traditional values.²⁸ Notable for its metaphorical colour was Fănuș Neagu's *Îngerul a strigat* (The Angel Cried Out), an account of one man's vendetta to avenge the murder of his father, set against the background of the war, the drought of 1947 and the collectivisation of agriculture in the early 1950s.²⁹ The publication of two extracts from Paul Goma's *Ostinato* in *Gazeta literară* in February and *România literară* in December 1968 extended the limits of censorship even further. The line was drawn at what Party spokesmen considered 'rightist tendencies', an accusation directed at the literary critic Ion Negoitescu, who had only re-emerged in print two years earlier. In February 1968, he published in the Oradea literary journal *Familia* (Family) an outline of a history of Romanian literature that he intended to write.

His proposal challenged the accepted values established by the official literary histories and reflected in school textbooks. Not only did he describe the years 1948-55 as a 'historical void' but, more fatally, he also proposed to omit such exponents of Socialist Realism as Eusebiu Camilar, Valerian Gălan and Remus Luca. He ensured that he would become a target for the literary establishment by classifying the novels of Eugen Barbu, Marin Preda and Zaharia Stancu as 'literature of transition'. *Scnteia* cast doubt on the scholarly value of the intended history³⁰ while *Luceafărul*, whose editor was Eugen Barbu, expressed disappointment at Negoitescu's underestimation of the literature of the 1950s and his overestimation of the young writers of the 1960s.³¹ Needless to say, Negoitescu's history did not appear.

The fate of a similar work in the same year demonstrated that publication did not always represent safe passage over the hurdle of official sanction. The volume in question was an anthology of modern Romanian verse compiled by a young critic, Nicolae Manolescu and entitled *Poezia română modernă* (Modern Romanian Poetry). It adopted as its confines the poetry of George Bacovia (1881-1957) and Emil Botta (1912-72). Although the anthology was given the censor's imprimatur, its contents clearly upset political

²⁸ M. Preda, *Intrusul*, Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1968.

²⁹ F. Neagu, *Îngerul a strigat*, Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1968.

³⁰ *Scnteia*, 19 May 1968.

³¹ *Luceafărul*, 16 April 1968.

sensibilities and orders were given for it to be seized in the bookshops.

Despite the fact that these attacks on official literary values and on the writers who embodied them were successfully fought off by Barbu, the pressure for reform in the literary establishment, particularly among young writers, was mounting under the example of the 'Prague Spring'. While the Party carefully dispensed the measures of concessions, as is shown by Ceaușescu's March speech, the effective administration of them called for sacrificial lambs. The green light given by the First Secretary to discuss internal policies produced a rapid response from younger writers. In their vanguard was Adrian Păunescu, the Secretary of the *Uniunea Tineretului Communist* (Union of Communist Youth) section of the Writers' Union. In April and May 1968, Păunescu had organised a series of meetings during which full rein was given to criticism of the editorial policy of *Luceafărul*, the editor-in-chief of which since 1962 had been Eugen Barbu. One of the May meetings was given a pronounced political character by Dumitru Tepeneag, a writer closely identified with the *Povestea Vorbiei* group. Tepeneag accused Barbu of being the Party's cushion against pressure from the younger generation who wanted to see the implementation of a programme of reforms modelled on Czech lines instead of being asked to accept the sop of nationalism. The meeting ended with a call for Barbu's replacement with Paraschivescu and Nicolae Breban.³²

Tepeneag's outspokenness and the support it drew from his younger colleagues posed a threat to the Party's careful control of concessions. At a meeting of the bureau of the Writers' Union and representatives of the Central Committee, including the Party ideologist, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, it was decided to sacrifice Barbu, who was dismissed as editor of *Luceafărul* at the beginning of June. His successor was neither Paraschivescu nor Breban but Ștefan Bănuțescu, a figure more acceptable to the Party and whose appointment was probably designed to head off a conflict between the two sides.

Whether that conflict would have occurred had the invasion of Czechoslovakia not taken place can only be a matter of speculation. Ceaușescu's denunciation of Warsaw Pact allies in front

³² Gabanyi, p. 153.

of a huge crowd in Bucharest caught the public mood exactly and created a wave of support for the Party unequalled before or since. The rally to the Party colours, which were now those of the nation, was illustrated by a declaration in *Gazeta literară* signed by twenty-three young writers, among them Leonid Dimov, Alexandru Ivăsiuc, Petru Popescu, Adrian Păunescu and Dumitru Țepeneag, which expressed both their 'complete agreement with the position of the Party and of the Romanian government, as defined by Comrade Ceaușescu', and their undertaking to do 'all in our power to defend our fundamental values, our country and the peaceful construction of socialism in our country'. The same day Ivăsiuc, Păunescu and Goma joined the Party.³³

Despite the support given by writers to the Party in the wake of Ceaușescu's defiant stand over the invasion of Czechoslovakia, it was clear from the Writers' Conference of November 1968 that they were anxious not to lose the momentum for reform created by the June concession. For its part, the Party stressed the need for caution in implementing radical changes too quickly and held up the example of Czechoslovakia as a warning of what might be the consequences of such haste. While the proceedings of the conference were organised on a more democratic basis, for the first time in the form of a general assembly in which all writers could participate instead of a meeting of 'mandated' delegates, the role that the Party expected its writers to play was carefully monitored. A statement published before the conference defined the constraints: 'Marxism cannot accept the so-called independence or autonomy of art *vis-à-vis* society. It is the duty of literature to exercise a considerable influence on the intellectual, social and moral life of the individual.'³⁴ Whilst it was admitted that each writer possessed his or her own individual style and that 'diversity of style signifies respect for the individuality of the artist, that does not mean that this individuality cannot be stimulated or pointed in a particular direction'. The label to be attached to this method was not a new one, as emerged from the task assigned to literary critics which was defined in the First Secretary's report to the Ninth Party Congress in July 1965: they

³³ *Gazeta literară*, 22 August 1968.

³⁴ *România literară*, 17 October 1968.

were to 'require a literature that was committed, revolutionary and founded on the principles of Socialist Humanism'.

The Party's hopes of obtaining general support for the method were frustrated by the reaction of writers associated with *Povestea Vorbii* and others who sought to press home the advantage gained in the early summer. Concern that the debate should not degenerate into an attack on the Party's right to control literature led Marin Preda, as chairman of a session, to curtail certain of the speeches. More drastic measures were taken in the case of Paraschivescu, who almost missed the conference because the Union of Writers' car that was to bring him from his country home failed to appear. He reached Bucharest by train just in time to deliver a speech that has been described by those present as politically the most outspoken since 1948. Paraschivescu insisted that every group of opinion in the Union had the right to publish its own journal at its own expense, a reference to his experience with *Povestea Vorbii*. He called for the establishment of an independent publishing house to print the work of those who did not belong to the Writers' Union and for authors to be allowed to travel abroad and to visit the country of their choice.

The calls for institutional reform, of which Paraschivescu's discourse was the most extreme example, were insistent enough to persuade the conference to approve the introduction of a greater element of democracy in the organisation of the Union, which was splintered into a federation of regional associations, and to allow separate committees for poetry, prose and drama. Yet the Party was resolved to bring the Paraschivescu group into line or, failing that, to isolate it. Shortly after the review *Amfiteatru* published in its December issue a round-table discussion in which several members of the group participated, its editor Ion Băieșu was dismissed. At the same time, strong attacks on the group appeared in *Scînteia* (15 January 1969) and *Contemporanul* (10 January 1969).³⁵

The Party's success in exploiting the 'Prague Spring' while repressing demands in autumn 1968 for a relaxation of its supervision of literature was illustrated by the 'regime-sponsored' novels that provided a reappraisal of the Dej era. This reappraisal was a consequence of the internal Party struggle for supremacy that developed

³⁵ Gabanyi, p. 153.

late in 1967 between Ceașescu and Dej's old associates, Alexandru Drăghici, Chivu Stoica and Gheorghe Apostol. Ceașescu's strategy was to undermine the position of his rivals in the Politburo by highlighting the abuses committed by Dej in the Stalinist period and the 'old guard's' involvement in them. The culmination of Ceașescu's campaign was reached at the April 1968 Central Committee plenum, when he denounced Dej's 'transgressions of legality', the most serious of which was the arrest of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in April 1948 and his execution in April 1954. Ceașescu could claim exemption from guilt in the affair because he had joined the Politburo just two days after Pătrășcanu's death. The man held personally responsible for the execution was Ceașescu's chief rival in the 1968 Politburo, Alexandru Drăghici, who as Minister of the Interior in 1954, was in Ceașescu's words 'the organiser and executor' of the crime.³⁶ As a result, Drăghici was removed from all of his high offices in the Party and the State on 25 April 1968.

The denunciation of Dej and the rehabilitation of Pătrășcanu paved the way for the publication of several novels which caused a stir at the time because of their apparently audacious presentation of repression during the late 1940s and the 1950s. Such novels as *Principele* (The Prince)³⁷ by Eugen Barbu and *Păsările* (The Birds)³⁸ by Alexandru Ivasiuc were notable for their period detail and atmosphere. The former is a thinly disguised allegory of the Dej regime, set in the Romanian principalities during the Phanariot era (1711-1821). The prince (Dej) is portrayed as an instrument of a foreign will that has little sympathy for the interests of his subjects. The allusions to the Stalinist period are so thick as to include a project to build a canal which claims the lives of many of those involved in its construction. In his novel *F*, Dumitru Radu Popescu sought to apportion responsibility for the abuses committed in the name of Communism during the Stalinist era. A judicial enquiry exposes the violence employed in a village in the drive to forcibly collectivise peasant holdings. Reluctance to speak up about these crimes is equated with complicity in their perpetration.

³⁶ *Scînteia*, 28 April 1968.

³⁷ E. Barbu, *Principele*, Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1969.

³⁸ A. Ivasiuc, *Păsările*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1970.

The confines of the latitude allowed to novelists in their exposé of the recent past were indicated by the contrasting experience of Ivasiuc with his novel *Păsările* and Paul Goma with *Ostinato*. Both writers had been arrested as students in 1956 for involvement in actions connected with the Hungarian uprising and had become friends in prison. Both novels describe similar experiences: the arrest of a man in the 1950s for political crimes and his efforts to readjust to society after his release. In his description of the methods used to enforce collectivisation, of prison life and of the practices of the *Securitate*, Goma went further than any other Romanian author had done and too far for the censor. After an extract from the novel appeared in *Viața Românească* (Romanian life) in June 1969, changes were demanded in the complete version before submission for publication.³⁹ Although Goma attempted to meet the censor's objections, he eventually lost patience and allowed the book's publication in West Germany in 1971. Ivasiuc, on the other hand, made concessions in *Păsările* to enable it to pass the censor. His hero's arrest is justified on the grounds of his having denounced people innocent of crimes, while the security police officers are portrayed as veteran Communists who are on friendly terms with those interrogated.

The events of the Dej regime play a less important role in what is aesthetically one of the most accomplished novels of the 1970s – *Absenții* (The Absent Ones) by Augustin Buzura.⁴⁰ Constructed in the form of a monologue, the novel examines the spiritual crisis of a young doctor, Mihai Bogdan. This crisis is provoked by the corruption and opportunism which Bogdan encounters in the research institute where he works and by his gradual estrangement from his friend and colleague who has been tainted by these vices. Bogdan's conscience is further troubled by memories of a tragic childhood which are accentuated by a grotesque perception of his immediate surroundings, his neighbours and his home. The interaction between the hero's past and present experience is skillfully manipulated and gives the novel much of its tension. In overcoming this burden on his conscience, Bogdan represents the survival of the individual and the triumph of positive, one might say, Transylvanian values in a society cor-

³⁹ P. Goma, *Ostinato*, Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1969.

⁴⁰ A. Buzura, *Absenții*, Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1970.

rupted by the psychosis of opportunism and deformed by its brutalisation.

The critique of contemporary Romanian society in *Absenții* and the reassessment of the immediate past represented by *F* confirmed most writers in their optimism that the Party would tolerate a broader range of themes in creative literature. Despite some claims to the contrary,⁴¹ there is little doubt that Ceaușescu's proposals for the 'political-ideological activity [and] the Marxist-Leninist education of Party members and of all the working people' presented at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the RCP on 6 July 1971 were a bolt from the blue. Coming as they did in the wake of Ceaușescu's visit to China and North Korea, the seventeen proposals, or 'theses' as they were popularly dubbed, were elevated to the status of a 'mini cultural revolution' by most observers. Although couched in the term 'Socialist Humanism', they in fact constituted a return to the method of Socialist Realism and were therefore a reaffirmation of an ideological basis for literature that had, in theory, hardly been abandoned by the Party. The bland Socialist Humanism in literature, first advocated by Ceaușescu in July 1965, was little more than Socialist Realism fortified by a generous measure of nationalism: the Party leader defined it thus in July 1971, invoking the name of the celebrated Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga:

Anticipating the principles of our aesthetics today and, indeed, voicing a fundamental aim of true art of all times, the great Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga said that 'the man who does not write for his entire people is not a poet.'⁴²

The application of the proposals was to be supervised constantly and exactly by the Party. Fortunately, however, the efficacy of their implementation in literature was woefully wanting in comparison with the achievements of the original brand in the 1950s. The proposals called for 'the continuous growth of the Party's leading role in all domains of political-educational activity', an emphasis on 'the great achievements recorded by the Romanian people-builder of socialism', the improvement of 'forms of political and ideological training of the Party cadres and members'

⁴¹ Gabanyi, p. 176.

⁴² N. Ceaușescu, *Romania...*, vol. 6, pp. 174-80.

and 'a more rigorous control...to avoid publication of literary works which do not meet the demands of the political – educational activity of our Party [and of] books which promote ideas and conceptions harmful to the interests of Socialist construction'. In the repertoire of 'theatres, operas, ballet and variety theatres' stress was to be laid 'on the promotion of national productions having a militant, revolutionary character'.⁴³

The artistic community was numbered by the proposals and shocked into displaying a temporarily united front against them. Such veterans of the regime as Zaharia Stancu and Eugen Jebeleanu joined a large number of younger colleagues, among them Augustin, Buzura, Adrian Păunescu, D.R. Popescu and Marin Sorescu, in sounding the death-knell of Romanian literature. In Paris at the time, Leonid Dimov and Dumitru Țepeneag insisted in a broadcast on Radio Free Europe on the need for creative freedom in literature. Nicolae Breban resigned as editor-in-chief of *România literară* (Literary Romania) while in West Germany and attacked the proposals in an interview given to *Le Monde*. Intimidation was used in an attempt to isolate these 'dissidents', in whose number was also included Paul Goma. In December 1971, a new law regarding state secrets prohibited the broadcasting or publication abroad of any written material that might prejudice the interest of the state. Furthermore, the law forbade Romanian citizens to have any contact with foreign radio stations or newspapers, such activity being considered hostile to Romania. It is clear against whom this new law was directed.

The solidarity of opposition of the proposals was not broken by the authorities but by the writers themselves. The traditional friction and in-fighting between cliques re-emerged and fragmented the resistance. Adrian Păunescu and Fănuș Neagu argued over the editorship of *Luceafărul* after the resignation of Bănulescu. The position eventually went to a third party but as a result, Neagu left the opposition camp and aligned himself with Eugen Barbu, one of the few supporters of the proposals.⁴⁴ Another writer who professed to have received the 'theses' with 'a particular

⁴³ 'Exposition on the Programme of the RCP for the improvement of ideological activity, for raising the general level of knowledge and the socialist education of the masses, for grounding the relations in our society on the principles of socialist and communist ethics and equity', *ibid.*, p. 608.

⁴⁴ Others were Aurel Baranga and Mihnea Gheorghiu.

joy' and regarded them 'as a real aid to culture' was the poet, Nichita Stănescu.⁴⁵ Moreover, resentment felt by many writers at Goma's success in West Germany allowed a wedge to be driven between opponents.⁴⁶ The Party was swift to exploit this split by persuading the Writers' Union to convene its 1972 conference with delegates elected by secret ballot in place of a general assembly.

By playing on writers' envy and offering increased pensions and royalties, the Party engineered the exclusion of Goma and Țepeneag, who not only failed to be elected in the secret ballot but were jeered when they spoke at the Union delegate election meeting preceding the conference. Goma and Țepeneag were thus 'outlawed' by both the Party and their union. It was not solely their refusal to accept conformity which marked them out, for several colleagues such as Blandiana, Buzura, Doinaș and Sorescu had displayed similar moral and artistic integrity. It was their readiness to challenge the Party's cultural dictates which made them a target of the regime. The intrepidity shown by both was deemed provocative by fellow writers who were anxious not to jeopardise their privileges and were concerned that the application of the 'July theses' might be used as a principle for bringing new 'writers' into a disobedient Union. Most members of the Union preferred subtle evasion of the regime's constraints and were therefore reluctant to support the two 'dissidents'.

The Writers' Union did manage to fight off the Party's attempts to foist upon it its preferred candidates for the post of president at their 1977 conference, but four years later it accepted the Party's nominee, Dumitru Radu Popescu. By this time, the implications of the 'theses' had become increasingly evident, for they spawned a new ideology which some writers used as an opportune means of either reasserting a waning influence, in the case of Eugen Barbu, or of establishing one, in the case of Adrian Păunescu who, unlike Barbu, had originally criticised the 'theses'. That new ideology was protochronism. The espousal of protochronism, whose principal features were a promotion of a nationalist view of the Romanian past and a denial of external influences in Romanian culture, introduced a third element into the conflict between the Party and the Union, namely the

⁴⁵ *Sânțea*, 18 October 1971.

⁴⁶ Monica Lovinescu, 'Sub zodia tezelor din iunie', *Ethos*, 1 (Paris, 1973) p. 283.

protochronists. The latter allied themselves with the Party leadership to establish a hold over publications and censorship, and after being excluded from the Writers' Union conference of 1981 launched a campaign in retaliation to have the Union disbanded.⁴⁷

As a result, the Union's funds were partially frozen and it became impossible to grant members the loans which they sometimes needed to tide them over when they did not have an income from publication. The Party imposed new membership requirements, including approval by a local Party organisation, and after 1981, no more national conferences were permitted. Few new members were admitted, partly because the Party leadership insisted that only those with the right political credentials should be considered and partly because the Union executive blocked the very consideration of such nominees for fear that they might be eventually outnumbered. Meetings of the Union's sections of prose and poetry and of its regional bodies were forbidden with the result that its workings, including the award of literary prizes, was paralysed.

In these conditions of greater stringency, advocacy of protochronism offered a basis for advancement and influence within the literary establishment and it was eagerly seized by many critics and writers. At the same time, the small number of writers who were willing to speak out against the Party's reimposition of a cultural ideology were picked off without difficulty. Nicolae Breban's return to Romania in May 1972 and his reinstatement as editor-in-chief of *România literară* demonstrated the reward for conformity. By contrast, Țepeneag's isolation was officially confirmed when he was deprived of his citizenship in 1975 while in France, on the false grounds that they had requested political asylum there. Goma, although dismissed from his position on the editorial board of *România literară* in 1973 and expelled from the Party, remained defiant and provided more embarrassment for the regime. In April 1977, he was arrested after making public the contents of a letter addressed to Pavel Kohout, the spirit behind Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and sending two letters to Ceaușescu denouncing the *Securitate*.⁴⁸ Released shortly after-

⁴⁷ K. Verdery, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7.

⁴⁸ M. Shafir, 'Who is Paul Goma?', *Index on Censorship*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1978), pp. 33-6.

wards, Goma was allowed to leave Romania with his wife and child on 29 November 1977.

The 'Goma affair' represented the sum of Western awareness of Romanian writers' activity during the late 1970s. His treatment by the regime for exposing human rights abuses in Romania caught the attention of the Western media, whereas the success of non-conformist writers in bypassing the ideological strictures of 1971 passed unrecognised. These writers were actively encouraged by a small number of directors of publishing houses who sanctioned an elastic interpretation of ideological tenets. Their number was further reduced with the death in 1980 of Marin Preda, director of *Cartea Românească* (The Romanian book), who approved the publication of Buzura's *Fețele tăcerii* (The Faces of Silence) in 1974.⁴⁹

In this novel, a former Party activist, Radu Gheorghe, and one of his political opponents, Carol Măgureanu, recall together the events that took place in a village during the early years of Communist power. Each tries to explain his own actions to a young reporter, Dan Toma, who is engaged to Gheorghe's daughter. The journalist is unwillingly drawn back into the period of the late 1940s, with its contradictions and personal suffering. The accounts, almost confessions, given by both men are coloured by their political beliefs. Gheorghe seeks to vindicate the results achieved by the regime while Măgureanu is much more reserved about its 'successes'. Toma, as the recipient of these two differing eye-witness accounts of revolutionary change, is gradually shaken out of his indifference to the past and becomes conscious of the nature of the revolution. The 'faces of silence' are 'faces' or 'aspects' of memory, represented by the two versions.

Among the writers for whom the nationalist posturing of Ceașescu provided a channel for their own sympathies were Eugen Barbu and Marin Preda. Both reintroduced in novels published in 1975 the person of Marshal Ion Antonescu, Romanian dictator from 1940 to 1944 (Barbu in *Incognito*⁵⁰ and Preda in *Delirul*).⁵¹ Their presentation of Antonescu was, however, quite different. Barbu's figure was the object of character assassination

⁴⁹ A. Buzura, *Fețele tăcerii*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1974.

⁵⁰ B. Barbu, *Incognito*, Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1975.

⁵¹ M. Preda, *Delirul*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1975.

at the hands of an author who selectively used official material to pass judgement on the dictator and his access to this material suggested the official sanction given to his novel. Artistically, it was disappointing. There was little convincing development of action or character, the protagonist Vasile Dănac, a member of the proscribed Communist Party, serving as the common bond between the events of the novel.⁵² By infiltrating the Ministry of the Interior under a false identity on the orders of the Party, Dănac takes part in an act of sabotage, in an attempted rescue of a scientist from German hands and also witnesses the trial of Antonescu. The trial is fictitiously re-created and provides the author with an opportunity to attack the corruption of Romanian politics with an acerbity that exceeds the condemnation of it suggested by the official transcript of the trial.

This one-sided treatment of the Marshal contrasted with his sympathetic portrayal in *Delirul*. Preda's novel effectively rehabilitated the wartime leader and was said to have been validated by the ideological committee of the Central Committee.⁵³ The main character of the novel, Ștefan, a cousin of Niculae Moromete (a principal figure in Preda's earlier success *Moromeții*), is employed by a Bucharest newspaper to cover events on the eastern front. On his return to the capital, Ștefan discovers that his despatches have been censored to disguise the heavy Romanian casualties. His condemnation of this censorship is contrasted with Antonescu's persistent deluding of the nation over the price of the campaign in the Soviet Union. Unlike Barbu, Preda does attempt to present a historically balanced view of Antonescu: on the one hand as saviour of the nation from the Iron Guard, the rebellion of which he crushed in January 1941, and on the other as leading the nation to disaster by invading Russian territory beyond the River Dniester.

⁵² Parts of vol. 2 of *Incognito* (1977) were shown by Marin Sorescu to have been plagiarised from the autobiography of the Soviet writer Konstantin Paustovskii (1892-1967) entitled *Povest' o zhizni* (Life Story) (1955). The publication of Sorescu's revelations needed the sanction of Dumitru Popescu, a senior Central Committee figure responsible for cultural affairs, since Barbu himself was a Central Committee member at the time. Popescu had long held Barbu in low esteem.

⁵³ M. Shafir, 'The Men of the Archangel Revisited: Anti-Semitic Formations among Communist Romania's Intellectuals', *Studies in Comparative Communism*, vol. XVI, no. 3 (Autumn 1983), p. 229.

While Preda did not contradict the official verdict on Antonescu as a public figure, he did challenge the authorised view of Antonescu the private man as presented in *Incognito*. The self-centred, conceited and unfeeling dictator of Barbu's novel is unrecognisable in the tragic figure of *Delirul*, forced by Romania's position between Germany and the Soviet Union to side with the former in the hope of regaining Bessarabia. In a lengthy conversation with his mother, Antonescu explains that he came to power to save the country. Warned by his mother of the dangers of joining the Axis powers and of applying Nazi-inspired policies against the Jews, Antonescu reaffirms his determination to retrieve Bessarabia and here Preda doubtless struck a powerful note of sympathy with his readers.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the partial vindication of Antonescu provoked sharp criticism in the Moscow *Literaturnaia gazeta*, which prompted the Romanian authorities to instruct Preda to produce a revised edition. The changes made were largely cosmetic.⁵⁵

The sensational nature of *Incognito* and *Delirul*, with their introduction of figures and events that were previously taboo in the Communist period, assured their success with the public. This particular recipe was used by Ion Lăncrăjan, an avid exponent of protochronism, of whom it may be said that his output became progressively more subservient to the darker side of the Romanian mind. Whereas *Caloianul* (The Rain Talisman) attracted attention for its criticism of the part played by the Politburo members Ana Pauker and Iosif Chișinevski in the cultural life of the early 1950s and for its suggestions of corruption and persecution,⁵⁶ *Fiul secetei* (The Son of Drought) revealed the author's sympathies for the Iron Guard and his latent anti-Semitism.⁵⁷ Lăncrăjan went on to contribute to the officially encouraged chorus of rejoinders directed at what were regarded by the regime as Hungarian revisionist statements on the injustice of the award of Transylvania to Romania in 1920 by the Versailles Peace Conference. His *Cuvînt despre Transilvania* (Sermon on Transylvania) is a col-

⁵⁴ Preda, *Delirul*, pp. 152-3.

⁵⁵ M. Preda, *Delirul*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1975, 2nd revised and enlarged edition.

⁵⁶ I. Lăncrăjan, *Caloianul*, Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1977.

⁵⁷ I. Lăncrăjan, *Fiul secetei*, Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1979.

lection of lengthy anti-Hungarian diatribes that are distinguished by their vehemence and by their large print-run of 50,000.⁵⁸

The anti-Semitic language of Lăncrănjan's *Fiul secetei*, published in 1979, offered a foretaste of the revival of anti-Semitism in the Romanian media in the 1980s which the chauvinist postures of extreme protochronists nurtured. Anti-Semitic language reappeared in Romania for the first time since the Second World War in the Bucharest cultural weekly *Săptămîna*. In an unsigned editorial entitled 'Ideals' (5 September 1980), the loyalty of indigenous Romanians to the Communist Party and the nation was contrasted with the cowardice of those who 'run away in the face of hardships'. The latter, the editorial explained, were 'visitors...avid for enrichment, teachers of the democratic tarantella clad in stinking mantles, Herod's strangers to the interests of this nation...who occasionally succeed in making one dizzy with their display of trafficker patriotism. We have no need of lazy prophets, for Judas who lack the Romanian dimension of self-sacrifice in their easily purchaseable blood.'⁵⁹

Săptămîna's editor was Eugen Barbu, an arch-protochronist, but the author of the editorial was later discovered to be a member of his staff, Corneliu Vadim Tudor who, after the overthrow of Ceauşescu, resumed his partnership with Barbu to produce the ultranationalist and anti-Semitic weekly *România Mare*.

The editorial alarmed the Jewish community in Romania, especially as the attack in *Săptămîna* echoed language used by Lăncrănjan in his *Fiul Secetei*, where the hero is astonished that 'merchants and traffickers' were able to expel genuine workers from the Communist Party. While Rabbi Rosen, the leader of the Jewish community in Romania, had demonstrated an aversion for direct confrontation with the regime, a number of Jewish intellectuals insisted that he take a stand on the issue.

At the end of September, Rosen sent a letter of protest to Gheorghe Pană, the mayor of Bucharest and nominally in charge of the Committee for Culture and Socialist Education in the capital; on 8 October, he addressed a similar letter to *Săptămîna*, which they did not print.⁶⁰ It was only six weeks after the editorial's

⁵⁸ I. Lăncrănjan, *Cuvînt despre Transilvania*, Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1982.

⁵⁹ Shafir, 'Men of the Archangel', p. 224.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

publication that a retraction appeared on 24 October, stating that the editorial board condemned any manifestation of nationalism, chauvinism and anti-Semitism. The retraction satisfied Rosen and there the matter might have rested had not a brochure containing material of a defamatory nature begun to circulate in significant numbers in Romania. The brochure included a copy of the *Săptămîna* 'Ideals' editorial as well as the text of Rosen's protest letter to the journal, the latter under the title 'Chief Rabi [*sic*] Trafficker Patriot'. The hostile reaction in Israel and in Jewish circles abroad to the brochure's appearances led Romanian diplomats to explain that it had been printed abroad (ostensibly in Paris) and shipped into Romania by the Milan-based Iosif Constantin Drăgan, who was alleged to have close links with the *Săptămîna* editorial team and who was the publisher of Giurescu's *How to Falsify History*.

This attempt to deflect a suspicion that the Romanian regime was itself the sponsor of anti-Semitic publications failed to convince anyone who knew how difficult it was to bring unauthorised publications into the country. The renewed international concern and especially the power of the Jewish lobby in the United States Senate to hold up the extension of most-favoured-nation status prompted Ceașescu to take the unprecedented step for him of including a round condemnation of anti-Semitism in a speech delivered in Bucharest in April 1981.⁶¹ And yet there were suggestions that the whole *Săptămîna* episode was sparked off by Ceașescu's anger at the Jewish lobby's attempts to make the extension of most-favoured-nation status conditional on Romania's goodwill over Jewish emigration.⁶² It would not have been the first time that a desire to ingratiate themselves with the President had spawned ill-considered actions by sycophants who took their leader at his word, however intemperate.

In the same year, 1980, there appeared what was politically the most notable novel of the post-war years in Romania: Marin Preda's *Cel mai iubit dintre pămînteni* (The Most Beloved of the Earth Dwellers).⁶³ This testimony of the first fifteen years of Com-

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 241, note 86.

⁶³ M. Preda, *Cel mai iubit dintre pămînteni*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 3 vols, 1980; reprinted 1984.

munist power (that is, of the pre-Ceaușescu period) not only challenged the principles of some aspects of Marxist theory, such as the collectivisation of agriculture and nationalisation of all means of production, but also set up as its targets the subversion of the law for political ends and the abuses committed by the security forces.⁶⁴ Preda's graphic description of conditions in forced labour camps at a lead mine and on the Danube-Black Sea canal conveys the torment and misery of a society at the mercy of the arbitrary use of power. Equally striking is Preda's assessment of the adverse moral effect that this totalitarian regime has upon its citizens. The perversion of traditional values in a society that has been taken over by 'troglodytes' is seen as a concomitant of Romania's political fate during what Preda's hero terms *era tiăloșilor* ('the era of the villains').⁶⁵

There was much speculation as to how the novel was able to appear, ranging from the claim that Preda, as the director of *Cartea Românească*, was able to publish the book on his own responsibility, thus bypassing the *Consiliul Culturii* (Council of Culture), which assumed the role of censorship body in 1977, to the assertion that he enjoyed the patronage of a powerful Party figure. The key to the publication of several outspoken works since 1980 lay in the boldness of the *redactor* (editor) assigned by the publishing house to vet each manuscript, for it was the *redactor* who acted as the initial censor and was responsible to the Council of Culture for the imprimatur he or she gave. Officials in the Council of Culture gave the final green light for publication.

Two editors at *Cartea Românească*, Gabriel Dimisianu and Georgeta Naidin, were relieved of their posts in early 1985 for failing to carry out their tasks in the manner expected of them. Naidin was responsible for 'editing' Augustin Buzura's novel *Refugii* (Places of Refuge), which offered a critique of Socialist society but, unlike the novels of his contemporaries, was set in Ceaușescu's Romania.⁶⁶

Buzura's work also publicly reflected on dictatorship. On the

⁶⁴ At only one point does Preda seem to be making concessions when, in his account of interrogation by the security police, he makes his hero state, in contradiction with the general experience of political prisoners, that he was 'tortured almost all the time, not physically, but by aggression and violence against my most intimate feelings...' Preda, *Cel mai*, vol. 2, p. 21.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 339.

⁶⁶ A. Buzura, *Refugii*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1984.

eve of Ceaușescu's birthday in 1985, Buzura presented a portrait of a Party activist, simply referred to as 'R', in which many saw the Romanian leader:

In those years of the haunting decade...the teacher thought that R was the only illiterate person but since R spoke all the time and asked about everything, he had no chance to prove it. Later, when he considered himself to know everything. R...turned into an arrogant, irritable person who lacked self-control...Little by little threats and curses took the place of questions. He threatened those who did not treat him properly...so that people began to blame him even for those sufferings that were not his fault.⁶⁷

A fortnight later in the same column, Buzura looked forward to the fortieth anniversary of the 'victory over Fascism', with reflections on Mussolini and the nature of dictatorship. He took up the idea that amongst the features of dictatorship was its power to make 'one's life hell. It is a sort of slow and obscure assassination, put into practice by a variety of invisible accomplices.'⁶⁸ The pro-regime *Săptămîna* responded by criticising Buzura's two articles and after the 14 February issue his column ceased to appear.

For statements on the realities of life in Romania poetry was the richest source. In a negative sense, the activity of Adrian Păunescu is eloquent. The cap of opportunism fitted this poet well since, from being in the vanguard of critics of the July 1971 proposals, he had progressed to ingratiating himself sufficiently with the Party under the banner of protochronism to be appointed editor-in-chief of the weekly literary journal *Flacăra* in 1973 and a member of the Central Committee until his displacement at the Thirteenth Party Congress in November 1984. Despite the punctuation of his accomplished verse by regular paeans in honour of the President during the 1980s, his fall from grace after the November Congress was rapid, attended by gratification from almost all fellow writers.⁶⁹ The pretext for his dismissal from

⁶⁷ A. Buzura, *Tribuna*, no. 3 (17 January 1985), p. 5, quoted from *RFE Research*, vol. 10, no. 9, part III (1 March 1985), p. 15.

⁶⁸ *Tribuna*, no. 5 (31 January 1985), p. 25 quoted from *RFE Research*, as note 67.

⁶⁹ An example of his adulatory poetry was '*Privește, țară!*' (Look, country!) on the occasion of the 13th Party Congress (*Scînteia*, 17 November 1984). The sun is said

Flacăra and an investigation into the source of his financial fortune was a concert of verse and music organised by him at Ploiești in the late spring of 1985, in which his exhortation to perform the rites of the season during a temporary blackout was taken too literally. Reports of the ensuing dissipation reached the ears of the President, who decided that his personal troubadour had gone too far. Although there was talk of his being sent for trial on corruption charges, Păunescu re-emerged in *Contemporanul* with a weekly column.

Among the few writers unwilling to bow the knee were Dorin Tudoran,⁷⁰ Ana Blandiana,⁷¹ Ștefan Augustin Doinaș,⁷² Marin

to rise through the President for Romanians:

Dacă prin el și soarele rasare

Pentru români, din nou, din București.

⁷⁰ The short story writer Dorin Tudoran (1945–) felt unable to accept the imposition from the Party in July 1981 of the new President of the Writers' Union, Dumitru Radu Popescu. After resigning from the Council of the Union, Tudoran was dismissed as an editor of the cultural weekly *Luceafărul*. Consequently, he resigned from the Communist Party. Unable to find a publishing house willing to accept his work, he applied in April 1984 for a passport to emigrate with his family. His request was ignored and a year later he embarked on a hunger-strike (on 15 April). On 26 April, a petition signed by, among others, Vladimir Bukovsky, Eugene Ionescu and Eduard Kuznetsov, was published in the Paris press. Three months later, on the eve of consideration of the renewal of Romania's most favoured nation status by the US Congress, both Tudoran and the dissident priest Gheorghe Calciu were granted exit visas by the Romanian authorities.

⁷¹ Following the publication of poems by Ana Blandiana in the December 1984 issue of the student review *Amfiteatru*, its poetry editor was demoted and the poet 'reprimanded'. One of the poems was 'The Children's Crusade', a comment on the presidential decree outlawing abortion:

An entire people,

not yet born,

but condemned to birth

in columns before birth

foetus beside foetus,

an entire people

which does not see, does not hear, does not understand,

but moves forward.

Through writhing bodies of women,

through the blood of mothers

unconsulted.

⁷² One remarkable example is 'Habeas Corpus Poeticum', *România literară*, 19 June 1978. I am grateful to Doreen Berry for drawing my attention to this poem. Doinaș was also a signatory, along with the philosophers Constantin Noica,

Sorescu⁷³ and Ileana Mălănciou.⁷⁴ Their ranks were strengthened by a younger talent, Mircea Dinescu (1905–), whose poem ‘Indulgență de iarnă’ (Cold comfort) gave a response to the pressures of daily life:

God preserve me from those who want
What's best for me,
the nice guys
always ready to inform on me cheerfully.
From the priest with a tape-recorder under his vestment
and the blanket you can't get under without saying
Good evening.
From the dictator caught in the chords of the harp,
from those angry with their own people.
Now, when winter is drawing close,
we have neither high walls
nor geese on the Capitoline,
only great provisions of tolerance and fear.⁷⁵

Alexandru Paleologu and others, of a memorandum sent to the mayor of Bucharest in April 1985 showing how the monastery of Văcărești could be saved from its planned demolition to make way for the new presidential complex currently under construction.

⁷³ A small selection of the verse of these four poets in English translation can be found in A. Deletant and B. Walker (trans.), *An Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Poetry*, London: Forest Books, 1984. Sorescu's work has appeared in the following translations: M. Hamburger (trans.), *Selected Poems*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1983; A. Deletant and B. Walker (trans.), *Let's Talk about the Weather*, London: Forest Books, 1985; J.F. Deane (trans.), *The Youth of Don Quixote*, Dublin: Daedalus Press, 1987; D.J. Enright et al. (trans.), *The Biggest Egg in the World*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1987; D. Deletant (trans.), *Vlad Dracula the Impaler*, London: Forest Books, 1987; and G. Dragnea, S. Friebert and A. Varga (trans.), *Hands behind my Back*, Oberlin, OH: College Press, 1991.

⁷⁴ Mălănciou's volume of verse *Urcarea muntelui* (The Scaling of the Mountain) was sold out within hours of publication in August 1985. It was criticised by the novelist Eugen Barbu for its 'negative' approach and the director of the publishing house responsible (Albatros) was dismissed. A selection of Mălănciou's poems in translation has been published in *Silent Voices: an Anthology of Contemporary Romanian Women Poets*, London: Forest Books, 1986.

⁷⁵ Originally from the volume *Democrația naturii* (Nature's Democracy), Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1981, p. 11, this poem and others by Dinescu have appeared in Mircea Dinescu, *Exile on a Peppercorn* (trans. A. Deletant and B. Walker), London: Forest Books, 1985.

A less explicit but insidious challenge to the Party's claim to a monopoly of the truth emerged from the intellectual debate generated by two books published in the 1980s. One, *Jurnalul de Păltiniș* (The Păltiniș Diary),⁷⁶ was written by the philosopher Gabriel Liiceanu; the other, *Epistolar* (Letters), was edited by him.⁷⁷ The inspiration for both was the work and activity of the philosopher Constantin Noica (1909-87), the most significant of the cultural figures to re-emerge into the cultural consciousness during the 'Bucharest Spring' of 1968. Nineteen years earlier, he had been placed under arrest for writing a half-completed study of Goethe, the manuscript of which was confiscated and never returned. He was subsequently confined to the small provincial town of Cîmpulung Muscel for nine years until December 1958, when he was sent to prison and held until August 1964. His experience was brought to the attention of Peter Benenson by the Romanian *émigré* Ion Rațiu and led to the founding of Amnesty International in 1961. Between 1949 and 1958, Noica supported himself by giving private lessons in mathematics and foreign languages and this period of his life he described as 'a delight', since it gave him a spiritual renewal and an opportunity for meditation. The fruits of those years were later offered to the public in a series of speculative works, including *Rostirea filosofică românească* (Romanian Philosophical Speech, 1970) and *Sentimentul românesc al ființei* (The Romanian Sense of Being, 1978). Although Noica never held a teaching post, he attracted a circle of followers from the younger generation of intellectuals, who regarded him as master, counsellor and friend.

Noica's objective was to produce a theory of the relationship between tradition and modernity, a project which naturally attracted the attention of both the *protocroniști* adherents of the theory that ethnic Romanians were the original inhabitants of their present territory, and the modernists, advocates of the value of Romania's links with the West. Amongst the latter were his most enthusiastic disciples, for whom the epithet 'Noicasian' was coined, but Noica's own position in the argument between the protocronists and modernists was ambiguous. This is not the place to dwell upon

⁷⁶ G. Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de Păltiniș*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1983.

⁷⁷ G. Liiceanu (ed.), *Epistolar*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987.

his hesitation.⁷⁸ What is more important for this assessment of intellectual compliance and dissidence is the use made of Noica's work by both sides in an attempt to confer upon their case a greater authority. By underlining the nationalist aspects of Noica's philosophy, with its insistence upon the effort to identify a unique Romanian spirituality, the *protocroniști* hoped to appropriate him and thereby gain greater political influence within Party circles.

Noica's propulsion from the realm of abstract philosophy into the arena of cultural politics resulted from the publication of *Jurnalul* and *Epistolar*. Despite their abstruse philosophical subject matter, many Romanian cultural intellectuals regarded both books as the most exciting publications of the decade. That view was not shared by all of their *émigré* colleagues, as shall be shown later. The two books produced a host of reviews in the Romanian literary press and added further fuel to the conflict between advocates of *protocronism* and their opponents. In *Jurnalul de Păltiniș* Liiceanu gives a record of Noica's conversation with his 'pupils', in this case principally Liiceanu himself and Andrei Pleșu, during visits of three to ten days to the philosopher's Transylvanian mountain retreat of Păltiniș between 1977 and 1981. In the sense that, through his conversation, Noica seeks the improvement through the dialectical method of the learner, he is a Socratic figure. Such improvement is nurtured by a daily programme of reading, meditation and discussion, leavened by walks in the mountains near Păltiniș. Unlike Socrates, Noica has no enthusiasm for the life of the city streets; indeed, *Jurnalul* constantly echoes the relief expressed by the visitors at the brief escapes from the tension and 'hysteria' of Bucharest or of what remains of its eighteenth-century centre. A further reason for avoiding Bucharest was the prevalence there of 'protocronist' ideas: 'Bucharest continues to lie under an offensive of *protocronism*, a cultural symptom that, by departing from an inferiority complex, almost always ends in a denial of Europe.'⁷⁹

It was as an alternative to these ideas that Liiceanu offered *Jurnalul*, as his choice for its subtitle, 'A paedutic model for humanist culture', showed. Noica's quest for twenty-two geniuses for whom he put himself forward as a trainer presented a challenge to the Party-backed attempt by the *protocroniști* to dominate cultural

⁷⁸ It is discussed at length by Verdery, *op. cit.*, pp. 262-4.

⁷⁹ Liiceanu, *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș*, p. 137.

output. It was precisely Noica's importance as an agent of cultural transmission and his search for geniuses rather than his writings which his followers underlined and which attracted the ridicule of some of his critics, who equated the search with the recruitment of two teams of football players.⁸⁰

It was in the intellectual ferment generated by *Jurnalul* and captured in the sequel of letters entitled *Epistolar* that overt resistance to the regime was concentrated. Liiceanu's correspondence with both admirers and critics registered the debate, made public for the first time, about the need in Romania for living 'in truth' and for dispensing with ambiguity. The exercises in sincerity, self-criticism and the generosity of spirit displayed by all the correspondents in *Epistolar* were chords in the particular sense of harmony produced by the book and provided a sign that the collective conscience of the forces of light in the country were stirring. The scale of the threat which the regime deemed to be posed by Liiceanu and his associates to its monopoly of control was evident from the selective serialisation by the arch-*protocronist* Eugen Barbu of the *Epistolar* in the mass circulation *Săptămîna*. Over a period of almost a year the correspondents were ridiculed in Barbu's weekly column for their elitism and alleged hypocrisy by a man who had been collaborating for over a decade to promote a nationalist view of the Romanian past and its culture, which, by denying external influences, had deformed the Romanians' perception of themselves and their place in history. Whereas *Epistolar* was, above all else, a plea for normality and Noica in *Jurnalul* the symbol of that normality and a *purificatio spiritualis*, Barbu represented the complete antithesis, as his lauding of the Romanian Nero and his Poppaea amply demonstrated.

Barbu's assault on Liiceanu prompts the question of how the two books were published in the first place. As with Buzura's novels, the answer probably lies in the convergence of a number of factors, not least the boldness of the publisher's reader, Sorin Mărculescu in both cases, and his desire to defend and promote certain cultural values. In the poverty of creative writing of the decade, the two books stood out by reason of their artistic elegance. Liiceanu's profound intuition, his sensitivity to his surroundings and his clarity of style enhanced the tensions explored in the

⁸⁰ Verdery, *op. cit.*, p. 285.

Jurnalul and ensured that it would be a bestseller. At the same time, the appearance of both books showed how hazardous it was to dismiss all cultural production in the 1980s as subservient to the regime. But how relevant were these two books to the public expression of dissent in Romania?

To return to the reception given to the books by some Romanian *émigrés* alluded to earlier, both were dismissed as 'abstract' and 'irrelevant'. Here is what Matei Călinescu, a respected literary critic resident in the United States, had to say:

Epistolarium is a series of Socratic debates, and without a doubt, the exchange of letters of which the book consists is intellectually very exciting. On the other hand, the debate could have occurred on the moon. There is absolutely nothing concrete in the book, none of the things we are discussing today. It could have been written fifty years ago or in another country.⁸¹

Călinescu commented on the divorce between intellectuals and politics and referred to a discussion the mathematician Mihai Botez had once had with Liiceanu:

Liiceanu summarised his position as follows: 'We are here to deal with cultural matters. We cannot solve the problem of the meat supply'. In other words, intellectuals should focus on cultural matters, and as long as they can do it in an interesting fashion, it's fine. Therefore, a fine book like *Epistolar* is also a cultural confession of social irrelevancy.⁸²

To the extent that Liiceanu's books had little manifest impact upon other social groups in Romanian society, such as the urban and peasant workers, Călinescu's assessment was correct but we may well ask what this sort of intellectual enterprise has to do with peasants? On numerous occasions, Liiceanu and his associates have emphasised that they saw their role as one of defending cultural values and this they regarded as a means of protecting the people from the aberrations of *protocronism* and the personality cult. And here one should not overlook the identification of many of the arch – *protocroniști* such as Barbu, Corneliu Vadim

⁸¹ M. Călinescu, *Romania: A Case of 'Dynastic' Communism*, New York: Freedom House, 1989, p. 73.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Tudor, Artur Silvestri and Dan Zamfirescu, with the inanities of the cult. It is partly as a result of their activity that the generalised view of Romanian creative intellectuals as servants of the regime gained currency.

A crude assessment of the attitude of writers would be that as long as they could publish, they did not question the regime. This is pithily summed up in an anecdote of a customer's exchange with a newspaper vendor: '*Aveți România?*' *Literară, da, liberă, nu*'. ('Have you got "Romania"? "Literary Romania", yes, "Free Romania", no.') Those who expected writers to play the role of a surrogate opposition were disappointed; on the contrary, they were used, by and large, to legitimise the regime. Yet drawing this broad conclusion runs the risk of ignoring the moral choices and moral dilemmas which many people, not just creative intellectuals, have to face under a totalitarian system. Of course, those who criticised from outside the country ran far lesser risks than those who did it from inside and a few writers, notably Buzura, did speak out, despite the risks, with the assistance of their friends in the publishing houses. But there is a justifiable sense of culpability felt by the community of writers of their compliance with the Ceaușescu regime which has led some of them since its overthrow to present their posture during the Ceaușescu era as they would like it to be seen rather than as it was. The pages of *România literară* and 22 abounded with such views in 1990. These figures were like Brecht's hero in *Drums in the Night* (1922), a prototype of the armchair revolutionary.

The phrase 'resistance through culture' has been appropriated by writers less deserving of the label than Liiceanu, Pleșu or other venerable figures mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It has been suggested that for Romanian intellectuals to do any more than they did under Ceaușescu would have been self-destruction and the example of the suppression of Goma is cited in support of this contention. Yet the Goma protest was successfully isolated by the regime precisely because so few persons were prepared to support it. Despite this compliance, a small number of writers, such as Blandiana and Dinescu, did consciously make a choice to speak out and run the risk of self-destruction. What adjective other than shameful is appropriate to describe the response to Dinescu's appeal for a general strike of writers in November

1989? Such reticence elicited a sense of guilt from the critic Octavian Paler after the Revolution.⁸³

For some literary critics, the degree of compromise with the regime offers a yardstick for a preliminary assessment of the aesthetic value of Romanian literature of the Communist period. A general classification of the literature which appeared between 1945 and 1989 has been attempted by the critic Ion Simuț, who broadly distinguished four parallel strands.⁸⁴ The first was what he termed 'opportunistic literature', one virtually written to order according to the regime's dogmas and which embraced the work of Mihai Beniuc, Zaharia Stancu, Titus Popovici, Dumitru Popescu, Adrian Păunescu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor; the second was 'subversive literature', which he regarded as a creation of the Ceaușescu era and which represented a deviation from the official line. Included in this category were the novelists Marin Preda and Augustin Buzura, the poet and playwright Marin Sorescu, the poets Ana Blandiana, Mircea Dinescu and Ileana Mălăncioiu and the critics Nicu Steinhardt and Alexandru Paleologu. Simuț placed within the category of 'dissident literature', which he defined as conveying 'an attitude directly hostile to the Communist regime', the writings of Paul Goma, Dorin Tudoran, Ion Negoieșcu, Mircea Dinescu and Dan Petrescu. The first three were driven into exile where, of course, the bulk of this type of writing was produced, notably by Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca, with their regular literary reviews on Radio Free Europe. The final type of literature was a 'political or aesthetic literature', that which avoided the official dogmas and represented a form of internal exile. Simuț considered the poetry of Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Nichita Stănescu, Leonid Dimov and Mircea Cărtărescu and the prose of Ștefan Bănuțescu to be representative.

Simuț was at pains to point out that his categorisation had no claims to be exhaustive and that it made no attempt to place the literature of the period on the scale of aesthetic values. A review of the creative literature of the post-war period shows that writing of value appeared, writing which ignored the official

⁸³ O. Paler, 'Care normalitate', *România literară*, no. 2 (11 January 1990), p. 3.

⁸⁴ I. Simuț, 'Care patru literatură', *România literară*, no. 29 (28 July–3 August 1993), p. 10.

prescriptions, defied stereotype themes and rejected wooden language. In order to preserve a value, such literature had to offer as authentic a view as possible of social reality. It did so without competition from the disciplines of history, sociology and political science, all of which were deliberately castrated under the Communist regime. It was only from Buzura's *Refugii*, for example, that readers could learn something about the miners' strike and its impact upon the mining community.

Another consideration of the literature of the period is linked to the means of expression. An Aesopian language characterised a major part of prose and poetry. Novels developed more allusive formulae, such as the parable. Poetry had recourse to an entire symbolism stemming from the same strategy of circumlocution. The use of the absurd was a means of denying censors access to the main message. It was not surprising that in a country that announced record grain harvests but where bread was rationed, which produced petrol but rationed it, which built thousands of apartments but could not heat them, where in order to buy underwear you had to buy 2 kilos of rotten fish, or in order to purchase a coffin you had to provide the wood, a literature of the absurd, exemplified by the poetry of Sorescu, should flourish.

The lengths to which the absurd could be taken by writers was most evident in the propagation of the personality cult. This comes back to the question of compliance amongst creative intellectuals. For if a small group of writers were prepared to ignore the official prescriptions in literature, an even larger body conspired in the concoction of the new truths demanded by the personality cult. New gods were created in the poems of Adrian Păunescu and the paintings of Sabin Bălașa and the insular society of Ceaușescu's Romania provided fertile ground for the development of a cult providing a focus for people's attention. Initially, the President was projected as that focus, but by the early 1980s it was extended to his wife Elena.

As mentioned earlier, the seeds of the cult were sown in acclamation of Ceaușescu's denunciation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. From that date, there can be detected a growing identification of Romania with a single figure in the editorials in the Party press and in the statements of officials. At the same time, the intellectual elite was called

upon to add its voice to the appreciation of the leader.⁸⁵ Birthday anniversary volumes containing poetry and prose in honour of President Ceașescu and his wife were published annually in the 1980s.⁸⁶ An anthology of some of the titles conferred on Ceașescu in the Romanian media in the 1980s, together with their authors, was compiled by Dan Ionescu and included 'architect', 'celestial body' (Mihai Beniuc), 'демиurge' (Corneliu Vadim Tudor), 'fir-tree' (Ion Manole), 'genius' (Eugen Barbu), 'god' (Corneliu Vadim Tudor), 'miracle', 'morning star' (Vasile Andronache), 'navigator' (Victor Nistea), 'Prince Charming' (Ion Manole), 'saint' (Eugen Barbu), 'saviour' (Niculae Stoian), 'sun' (Alexandru Andrișoiu), 'titan' (Ion Potopin) and 'visionary' (Viorel Cozma).⁸⁷

Any discussion of the acquiescence and collusion of intellectuals under Ceașescu should not ignore the role of the West in shoring up the regime. Pertinent here are remarks made by Mihai Botez in 1989:

People often ask me why the Romanians are not more courageous. I am not making apologies for the average Romanian but I'd like to say that opposing the evil regime is often not a matter of mere courage but also of a cost-benefit analysis. A lot of my colleagues from the university often say: 'Let's suppose we'll speak out. We'll criticise. What will be the result? I will be expelled from the university, sent into internal exile or forced to leave the country. The consequences of my actions for the system will be nil. The system is very well organised to resist my challenge. And the West? It's practically not interested in us. For years, nobody in the West cared about the internal problems of Romania.'⁸⁸

⁸⁵ A host of examples from 1971 to 1973 are to be found in 'Antologia Rușinii', *Ethos*, vol. 1 (Paris 1973) pp. 290-317; vol. 2 (1975), pp. 331-68.

⁸⁶ See, for example, the collections (no editors named), *Din fiecare inimă a țării* (From every heart in the country), Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1983; *Pentru cel ales* (For the chosen one), Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1985; and *Prinos de sărbătoare* (Festival homage), Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1985.

⁸⁷ 'An A to Z of the Personality Cult in Romania', *RFE SR/1* (2 February 1989), pp. 9-14. A shortened version is reproduced by J. Sweeney, *The Life and Evil Times of Nicolae Ceausescu*, London: Hutchinson, 1991, p. 181.

⁸⁸ M. Botez, *Romania: A Case of 'Dynastic' Communism*, New York: Freedom House, 1989, p. 53.

Botez himself complained:

For years, dissidents, people like me, were perceived as enemies of the West because they were trying to distance President Ceauşescu, this golden boy of the West in the Soviet camp, from the U.S. When David Binder, probably one of the most influential Western journalists writing on Eastern Europe, came to Bucharest, I met him in the house of an American diplomat. He said some quite unpleasant things, such as 'Who are you? What do you mean by Romanian dissidents? What do you mean by Romanian civil society? In the Balkans, such things never happen. We prefer to speak to people who represent 'real things', like Mr Ceauşescu. At least he has power.'⁸⁹

Binder's view was that of the pragmatist who recognised that foreign policy was also assessed on a cost-benefit analysis and the West's policy towards Romania was no different in that respect. 'To tweak the nose of the Russians', one of the reasons suggested by Corneliu Bogdan, the former Romanian ambassador to Washington, for President Nixon's decision to visit Romania in August 1969, summed up American policy towards Ceauşescu for most of this period.⁹⁰ British policy was largely determined by considerations of trade. Ceauşescu's state visit to Britain in June 1978 was arranged in the hope that it 'may act as a stimulus to British companies to grasp the growing opportunities for selling to Romania'.⁹¹ In according no room to morality in its dealings with Ceauşescu, the West had little right to expect much morality from Romanian intellectuals. The success of Ceauşescu's foreign policy towards the West enabled him to establish his absolute rule, as Botez was quick to point out:

The West, directly or indirectly, helped Ceauşescu and discouraged the opposition. Don't forget: three presidents of the United States, three presidents of France, the Emperor of Japan,

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

⁹⁰ J.F. Harrington and B.J. Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1991.

⁹¹ *State Visit of the President of the Socialist Republic of Romania and Madame Ceauşescu*, 13-16 June 1978, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Background Note, June 1978.

the Queen of England and a lot of other important people expressed their admiration for Romanian policies and Romania's independent course. It is very difficult for the internal opposition to criticise and to fight a policy that is perceived as successful by practically everybody in the world.⁹²

'1978 marked the apogee of Ceașescu's acceptability in the West.'⁹³ It was only after Ceașescu's relevance on the world stage was undermined by the accession to power of Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1985 that Western support for him faded. In September 1983, the popular Western image of Ceașescu as a benign figure was still being perpetuated by leaders such as Vice-President George Bush, who described him as 'one of Europe's good Communists'.⁹⁴ With the advent of Gorbachev, Ceașescu's usefulness as a bridge between East and West rapidly evaporated, for a number of the very positions which the Romanian leader had adopted in his foreign policy and which had gilded his 'liberal' image in the West now became features of Soviet policy: withdrawal from Afghanistan, removal of short-range nuclear weapons from Europe and reductions in nuclear arsenals. Once Ceașescu's failure to adopt *perestroika* and *glasnost* had begun to draw criticism from the Soviet leadership, some Western ambassadors, though by no means all, were instructed to make a point of inviting Romanian dissidents to official receptions.⁹⁵

There was another major reason behind Ceașescu's success in projecting a favourable image in the West: namely, his treatment of the Jewish minority. Under Ceașescu, the status enjoyed by the Jewish community was unique in the whole of the Communist bloc. The Jews enjoyed what one scholar described as 'possibly the greatest measure of autonomy among all denominations'.⁹⁶ This he attributed to their contracting numbers, leaving a

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁹³ M. Almond, *The Rise and Fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceașescu*, London: Chapman's, 1992, p. 100.

⁹⁴ V. Georgescu, 'Romania in the 1980s: the Legacy of Dynastic Socialism', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1988), p. 69.

⁹⁵ The United States and, within the European Community, the British, Dutch, and French Governments took the lead. The Greek and Italian governments, by contrast, were less enthusiastic.

⁹⁶ Shafir, *Romania: Politics...*, p. 157.

predominantly elderly community which posed no threat to the regime, to Ceaușescu's desire to promote a favourable image in the West, especially in the United States, and to the personality of Rabbi Rosen.

Religious practice by the Jews had been permitted under a statute published on 12 July 1949 which grouped Jewish communities in a Federation. On the recommendation of the Federation, a Supreme Rabbinical Council of twelve was appointed by the Minister of Cults, and in September 1949 Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen was named its president. Rosen's predecessor, Chief Rabbi Alexandru Șafran, fled to Switzerland in December 1947 after the dissolution of the Jewish Party. Rosen was prominent in the official attacks on Zionism, and at the 1950 conference of the Democratic Jewish Committee, he denounced as 'warmongers' the US Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, President Truman's veteran counsellor Bernard Baruch, and the adviser to the State Department Benjamin Cohen.⁹⁷ A recent book has credited Rosen with the fact that Jewish emigration was permitted between 1948 and 1952 but says nothing about his part in the anti-Zionist campaign.⁹⁸ It also attributes the resumption of emigration to Israel in 1958 to Rosen's 'fancy footwork',⁹⁹ without offering evidence for this assertion, and while it is true that in September 1958 a flood of exit visas was granted, no explanation is given of why it ceased in April 1959.

Behind the resumption of emigration to Israel lay a secret deal between Romania and Israel, described by Ion Pacepa in *Red Horizons*. In 1958 a British businessman, Henry Jakober, who had been conducting trade with Romania for several years, contacted the Romanian foreign intelligence resident in London, Gheorghe Marcu, and told him that Mossad was willing to pay the Romanian government a sum of money for each Jew allowed to emigrate. This arrangement was conditional upon it remaining a secret between the two intelligence services whose channels would be Jakober and Marcu.¹⁰⁰ According to a second book

⁹⁷ G. Ionescu, *Communism in Romania...*, p. 184.

⁹⁸ G. Galloway and B. Wylie, *Downfall: The Ceaușescu and the Romanian Revolution*, London: Futura, 1991, p. 73.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁰ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 73.

by Pacepa, Dej sought Khrushchev's approval for the deal and it was the Soviet leader who suggested that instead of money changing hands, livestock farms be built.¹⁰¹ This scenario, however, seems unlikely, given the Israeli insistence on utmost secrecy and on the Soviet intention to pursue a more conciliatory policy towards the Arab states.

In fact, the resumption of emigration to Israel from Romania in 1958 did go ahead and the Israelis provided the funding for a chicken farm to be constructed at Periș, a village north of Bucharest, on property owned by the Ministry of the Interior, but the exodus of Jews prompted protests from the United Arab Republic, whose Foreign Minister summoned the Romanian ambassador in February 1959. At the same time, the more friendly Soviet policy towards the Arab countries was compromised by the Romanian move. The emigration was halted, and Jews released from prison for alleged Zionist activities were re-arrested. However, in the following year a small number of Jews were allowed to emigrate. In 1961, hundreds of Jewish families were granted visas, provided they gave as a cover for their eventual destination of Israel a West European or Latin American country or Cyprus: in return a number of Western firms were secretly paid by Mossad to construct livestock farms in Romania. By the end of 1964, the Ministry of the Interior, in Pacepa's words, had become the largest meat producer in the country, exporting frozen pork, beef, turkey and chicken exclusively to the West. The money earned from these exports, between 8 and 10 million dollars each year, was placed in a secret account controlled exclusively by Dej.

It was not only Jews whose emigration was purchased in this way. Jakober also acted as the conduit for payment to Romanian intelligence of monies given by private individuals in the West for exit visas for their relatives in prison in Romania. The ransom demanded varied according to the status of the prisoner but was between \$4,000 and \$6,000. The procedure was as follows: Jakober was approached at his address at 55 Park Lane in London and given the name of the person to be ransomed. He then gave the name a reference number, which was quoted in all correspondence, and took the details to Bucharest. There a ransom fee was fixed by the Romanian intelligence directorate acting

¹⁰¹ Pacepa, *Moștenirea Kremlinului*, p. 405.

on Dej's orders and communicated to Jakober who, on his return to Britain, gave instruction to those paying the ransom to deposit the sum into Jakober's account at the Credit Suisse bank in Lucerne, Switzerland. The monies were only paid over to the Romanian authorities after the ransomed person had arrived in the West. In one such case, a ransom of \$4,200 was paid in August 1962 by relatives and friends for the release from prison of Maria Goleescu, the librarian of the British Information Office in Bucharest. She had been arrested in July 1949 for allegedly passing two letters to a member of the British legation from Ștefan Nenițescu, the former secretary to the Romanian Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu, and sentenced to twenty years in prison.

Under Ceaușescu, the 'Jakober-Marcu' agreement continued but the exchange was not for animal farms but for dollars. After Jakober's death from cancer the deputy director of Israeli intelligence in immigration matters, Dan Shaike Yesahayahu (alias Dan Yitzak Yesahanu), was alleged by Pacepa to have become the new partner in the agreement.¹⁰² A sliding scale of cash payment from \$2,000 upwards according to the age, education and profession of the individual seeking emigration was established and regular meetings took place between Marcu and Yesahanu at the Romanian embassies in Bonn, Vienna and Berne, at which Yesahanu handed over large sums of money in return for the lists of Jews approved for emigration. There was an extra premium for buying someone out of gaol. This sale of Jews netted Ceaușescu hundreds of millions of dollars and its success prompted him to authorise a similar export of ethnic Germans from Transylvania and the Banat after Romania established diplomatic relations with West Germany in 1967.

Jewish autonomy was institutionalised through the Federation of Jewish Communities, whose president was Rabbi Rosen. The Federation secured the religious, educational, cultural and medical needs of the community by maintaining synagogues in the principal centres of Jewish population, running chains of *kosher* restaurants and offering a service of 'meals on wheels' for the elderly, organising schools for the teaching of Hebrew and the study of the Talmud, providing medical and health care for Jews and by managing homes for the elderly. A Jewish museum was set up in Bucharest

¹⁰²Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 75.

at the end of the 1970s and one a few years later in Iași; a fortnightly cultural journal *Revista Culturii Mozaic* (Review of Jewish worship) with articles in four languages was published, although much of the material was censored by the Department of Cults. There was also a Jewish theatre and a Centre for Jewish Studies.

Ceaușescu's policy towards the Jews can be summed up in a few words: to let those who so wished emigrate in order to facilitate the process of creating a homogeneous Romania based on the majority Romanian element.¹⁰³ Emigration also released places of work and homes to be filled by the young generation of technocrats and skilled workers. At the same time, Ceaușescu created for himself the image of an enlightened leader, one who alone respected human rights in the Eastern bloc by allowing Jews to emigrate to their ancestral homeland and giving those who remained the possibility of cultivating their traditional values. In assessing the favourable impact his policies towards the Jews had both in Israel and in the United States, it should be remembered that Ceaușescu's stance contrasted sharply with that of his colleagues in the rest of Eastern Europe and especially in the Soviet Union, where the struggle for the rights of Soviet Jewry, both as a minority and for the right to emigrate, was energetically pursued in both Israel and the West.

Furthermore, there was Ceaușescu's opposition to the Brezhnev doctrine of intervention in a Warsaw Pact state every time a member was threatened by a 'counter-revolution', his criticism of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, his refusal to break off links with Israel after the Six Day War in 1967 and his abstention from voting in the United Nations for the resolution equating Zionism with racism; all of these acts produced the image of an autonomous foreign policy which enabled him to play the Jewish card very effectively when seeking 'most favoured nation' status from US administration. Indeed, the Romanian ambassador to Washington often received useful tactical advice in pursuing this goal from his Israeli counterpart.

It was not surprising that the 'give and take' which characterised Ceaușescu's relations with the international Jewish community

¹⁰³Y. Govrin, 'Organizarea Comunităților Evreiești din România în timpul lui Ceaușescu', paper presented at conference, 'The History of the Jews in Romania', Tel Aviv University, 17 December 1991, p. 7.

should also typify those with Rabbi Rosen, although many Jews both inside and outside Romania felt that what he had 'given' to the Communist regime since 1948 amounted to 'collusion'. Their opprobrium had been voiced most stridently by Golda Meir. 'The Romanian government should award you a special decoration for the services you have rendered them and for the speeches you have been making on their behalf. I don't believe a word you say', an angry Meir is reported to have told Rosen in New York in 1961.¹⁰⁴ Rosen made no attempt to deny his record of support for the regime or for Ceaușescu and justified it on the grounds of protecting Jewish interests. However, his critics felt that he had hidden behind this argument to justify his own acquiescence in Ceaușescu's policies instead of recognising that the Romanian leader was influenced more by what he could gain from international Jewish goodwill rather than from compliance at home. In short, the price Rosen paid at home for Ceaușescu's concessions had already been met by the Jewish lobby abroad. That price was validation of Ceaușescu's policies.

A case in point is the permission which Ceaușescu gave for the Jewish federation in Romania to receive assistance, both financial and material, from the Jewish agency *Joint*. Some will argue that it was Ceaușescu's dependence upon international Jewish goodwill which enabled Rabbi Rosen to extract Ceaușescu's assent, an assent which, once again, he alone amongst Communist rulers gave. Supporters of the Rabbi will claim that the permission was given in return for the latter's services to Ceaușescu. Yet there was also a further element of self-interest in Ceaușescu's decision. By accepting Jewish funds, he was saving monies which the Romanian state would otherwise have had to provide. All three considerations probably influenced Ceaușescu. It should not be forgotten that Rosen was particularly effective in running a campaign to get the US administration to grant Romania most favoured nation status, which it finally did in 1975. He travelled frequently to Washington in the early 1970s at the expense of the regime to lobby Congress by testifying to the religious tolerance enjoyed by Romanian Jews; his critics point to the fact that he stayed silent about the persecution of other religious groups, notably the Uniates and the Baptists.

¹⁰⁴ Galloway and Wylie, p. 77.

Rosen was not the only religious leader in Romania to say nothing about the persecution of others. The attitude of the prelates of the Orthodox Church, the largest religious denomination, has often been adduced as the prime example of not just compliance but also sycophancy towards the Communist regime. Relations between the Church and State in Romania in the Communist period are best described as ambiguous. Nothing highlighted the ambiguity of the regime's official cultivation of atheism more clearly than Nicolae Ceașescu's televised attendance in 1972 at the funeral of his father in the village church of Scornicești, conducted by an Orthodox Bishop and thirteen priests. The year before, special Christmas postage stamps were issued bearing reproductions of frescos on the painted church at Voroneț in northern Moldavia which depicted Stephen the Great holding a church he had founded and the Last Judgement. 'Were these religious stamps in celebration of the Nativity or were they secular stamps celebrating a nation's proud cultural heritage'?¹⁰⁵ The answer is that 'they were probably both. In this answer lies the key to the relationship which the Romanian Orthodox Church enjoyed with the regime. The Orthodox Church was used as an instrument for the promotion of a national identity by Ceașescu and as such, was rewarded with a privileged position amongst the Churches in Romania. Yet that privilege was not restricted since, despite the doubling of Bucharest's largely Orthodox population, only one new Orthodox church was built there after 1948.

Relations between the Churches and the State following the advent to power of the Romanian Workers' Party changed fundamentally. The very nature of Romania as a Christian state was threatened by the Party's policy of atheism, rooted in the doctrine of 'dialectical materialism'. Marxism-Leninism argued that religion was an instrument in the exploitation of the masses and predicted that it would be abandoned as progress towards Communism gathered pace. The Party's goal of revolutionising Romania by transforming the country into a Communist state demanded a monopoly of power. Controlling change implied control of all aspects of communal life, and in cases where that control could not be introduced, the respective organisation or institution was

¹⁰⁵T. Beeson, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, London: Fontana, 1974, p. 300.

abolished. A comparison of the different fates of the Orthodox and Uniate Churches provides an illustration.

Adjustment to their new status as an instrument of state policy led the Orthodox Church hierarchy to seek a justification of its position. Patriarch Justinian gave expression to the role of the Orthodox Church under Communism in his 1948 New Year address as Metropolitan of Moldavia:

This New Year finds Romania in new social conditions – the People’s Republic of Romania. The Church is not bound by finite institutions, created by men for their needs of the moment. The Church is created by the Eternal God. In this present age, she will support social justice, patriotism and seek man’s salvation. She must not remain closed, isolated within herself but be permanently vibrant in order to revolutionize the religious life of her community.¹⁰⁶

Christianity’s mission to defend the poor and needy provided the basis for Justinian’s reconciliation of the Church’s role with dialectical materialism:

Some consider materialism hostile to Christianity. We, however, judge men according to their deeds and achievements. We judge doctrine according to the order of society it produces. Can we not see in the present social order the most sacred principles of the Gospel being put into practice? Is not the sharing of goods, thus excluding them from the use of exploiters, better? ...Let us therefore be loyal and recognise that the state leadership has brought peace to men by assuring them of an existence and by allowing them to live off the first fruits of their own honourable labours.¹⁰⁷

There was, of course, nothing in Justinian’s pronouncements of this period about the peace denied by the Communist regime to men nor about its deprivation of an existence to the 300,000 Romanians held in the prisons and labour camps, many of whom had been placed there simply for their fidelity to a particular religious faith. Instead, Justinian concentrated on preserving his

¹⁰⁶ A. Scarfe, ‘Patriarch Justinian of Romania: His Early Social Thought’, *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 5, no. 3 (Autumn 1977), p. 165.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

own Church by giving it goals consistent with the Communist revolution. To this end, he proposed in 1949 the reorganisation of pastoral training, which would contain an emphasis on the education of villagers in new agricultural methods, as well as assistance with the government's literacy programme and a reform of monastic life, so that monks and nuns should be instructed in a useful trade. These 'new forms of life', as Justinian called them, did not diminish, in his view, the primacy of prayer, yet in them one can see an image of those sinister clones of the Ceașescu regime, the 'new man' and the 'new society'.

Justinian's sympathies enabled the Orthodox Church to survive the early 1950s relatively unscathed. He was regarded by his supporters as a major reformer, encouraging his clergy to take an interest in social work, a notable departure from Orthodox tradition. He improved theological training by requesting the professors of the two theological institutes to compile a number of manuals for use in seminaries throughout the country. As a result, the Romanian clergy were, in the view of one Western observer, 'the best trained in the Orthodox Church';¹⁰⁸ after 1964 a number were sent to study in Western Europe.¹⁰⁹ Justinian's most successful reform involved monastic life. The requirement of monks and nuns to learn a trade led several monasteries to register as co-operatives and set up workshops for weaving and other rural arts whose proceeds generated a useful income. Other monasteries set up farming co-operatives and in the process made themselves a vital part of a village community, employing labour from amongst the local peasantry. This development of monastic life meant that the number of monks and nuns in the country's 200 Orthodox monasteries stood in 1956 at 7,000, an increase.¹¹⁰

To Justinian's detractors, this 'success' was seen as a reward for subservience to the Communist regime. Many Uniates dismissed Justinian as a Communist stooge and an opportunist, particularly

¹⁰⁸ Beeson, *Discretion and Valour...*, p. 311.

¹⁰⁹ In 1973, there were 8,185 parishes and 11,722 places of worship served by 8,564 priests and 78 deacons. In Bucharest alone, there were almost 250 churches and 400 priests. The Church possessed two theological institutes of university standing, in Bucharest and Sibiu, with respectively 496 and 780 students in 1972-3. The majority of the clergy were trained in the seven cantors' schools and seminaries where 1,597 students were in residence over the same period. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

because of his exuberant reaction to the suppression of their Church and its absorption into the Orthodox Church. Yet his attitude was one which was rooted in a widespread belief which identified the unity of the Orthodox Church with the unity of the Romanian people. Such an attitude was easily exploited by the regime's propagandists, who translated diversity as a threat to national integrity. It is thus easy to see why the cultivation of ultranationalist sentiment and official support for the Orthodox Church went hand in hand under Ceauşescu and why today democracy and pluralism are regarded by ultranationalists in Romania, many of whom are products of the one-party state, as the principal enemy. Many of those who were imprisoned by the Communists pointed with bitterness to Justinian's exhortations to his clergy to participate in the construction of the new People's Republic but it was clear from the Patriarch's writings, assembled in a series entitled *Apostolat Social* (Social Apostolate),¹¹¹ that he saw forms of Socialism as an integral part of Christian belief. What Justinian failed to do was to question the methods used to build the new republic, and in doing so he was following his conviction that the Church should not engage in 'thoughtless' acts of opposition.¹¹²

Reconciliation of the Church's transcendental mission to save souls through faith in the teachings of Christ with its perceived obligations to serve the best interests of the People's Republic can only be attempted if one denies that a political system can influence this spiritual mission. This is precisely what Justinian argued, ascribing to the Church a dual role as a spiritual body and a social institution. There is little evidence to suggest that many Orthodox faithful quibbled about this distinction, seeing in Justinian an effective leader and defender of their Church. Throughout the period of Communist rule, his leadership was judged in terms of his effectiveness in preserving the Church, in keeping Orthodox churches open as a sanctuary against the trials and torments of everyday existence and offering a place for private prayer and reflection for those deeply troubled by their ordeal under Communist rule. As in other avenues of Romanian affairs, ambiguity explains Justinian's achievement, for

¹¹¹Patriarch Justinian, *Apostolat Social*, 10 vols, Bucharest: Editura Institututlin Biblic, 1949-71.

¹¹²Hitchins, p. 322.

in harnessing the Church to the social revolution, he was able to maintain throughout the twenty-nine years of his ministry (he died on 26 March 1977) a Church which provided a repository for the spiritual nourishment of his flock. Herein, the Orthodox will argue, lies the measure of his success.

One price of Justinian's alignment with the regime was support for the regime's foreign policy which, until the late 1950s, meant Soviet foreign policy. In 1948, the Orthodox Church was dragooned, like its fellow Churches in Eastern Europe, in the 'defence of peace', a movement initiated by the Communist-inspired World Peace Council. Romanian theological journals engaged in ritual condemnation of the World Council of Churches and, in particular, the Roman Catholic Church, both of which were denounced as instruments of Anglo-American imperialism. In the early 1960s, as Romanian foreign policy sought closer links with the West, so the Orthodox Church was encouraged to develop its own contacts beyond Eastern Europe, and in 1961 it entered the ecumenical movement.¹¹³

Relations with the Roman Catholic Church remained strained. Doctrinal disputes going back to the Middle Ages were compounded by what the Orthodox regarded as an aggressive proselytism practised by the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church since its creation in 1700. Justinian's silence in the face of the persecution of the Roman Catholic Church and his approbation of the Uniate Church's suppression in 1948 only added salt to the wounds of Romanian Catholics. Yet Justinian's compliance did not mean that the Orthodox Church completely escaped the hand of repression under Communism. To what extent the monasteries had become 'important spiritual and intellectual centres' in the Romania of 1958¹¹⁴ awaits further enquiry but there is no doubt that in the wave of stringent internal security measures taken to allay Soviet fears that the withdrawal of Soviet troops in that year might undermine the Romanian Party's control, the monasteries were identified as one source of potential opposition. Consequently, between 1958 and 1963, some 2,500 priests, monks, nuns and lay people were arrested, more than half the monasteries closed and more than 2,000 individuals compelled to leave the

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

religious life. In 1959, the government forced the Holy Synod to accept restrictions on monastic life and the three monastic seminaries were closed, thus halting the flow of novices. In 1966, further strictures were placed on the monasteries with the introduction of a regulation stipulating that all nuns under the age of forty and all lay brothers under the age of fifty must leave their monasteries and take up 'more socially useful' work.¹¹⁵ Discouragement of the monastic life continued throughout the Ceaușescu period but, as in the general case of religious worship itself, toleration rather than suppression was the order of the day. This co-existence which characterised relations between the regime and the Orthodox Church contrasted starkly with the fate of the second largest Romanian Church, the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church.¹¹⁶

Cracks were opened in the icy relations between the Holy See and Bucharest by the visit of Cardinal Koenig to the Romanian capital in November 1967 and by Ceaușescu's reception by the Pope on 27 May 1973, but the problem of a charter for the Roman Catholic Church and the question of the position of the Uniate Church remained unresolved. The sole functioning Roman Catholic bishop recognised by the state was the Hungarian Bishop of Alba Iulia, Aron Marton. Consecrated bishop in 1939, he showed his character and courage by speaking out against the persecution of the Jews in northern Transylvania in 1944, at which time it was under Hungarian rule. Eschewing the passivity displayed by the Calvinist bishop Janos Vasarhelyi and the Unitarian bishop Miklos Jozan, Marton travelled from his official residence in Alba Iulia, which was in the Romanian part of Transylvania, to Cluj, where on 18 May, he delivered a sermon in St Michael's Church condemning the ghettoisation of the Jews in the city and warning the Hungarians not to abandon the Jews to extermination. He called upon the Hungarian government to block the intended deportation of the Jews. Marton was rebuked by the Hungarian government for his stand, and as a result he was

¹¹⁵The effect of these measures against the monasteries can be gauged from the decrease in the number of 200 monasteries with over 7,000 monks and nuns in 1956 to 114 monastic houses and 2,068 religious (575 monks and 1,493 nuns) in 1972. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

¹¹⁶See Chapter 1.

not allowed to return to Cluj until the war ended.¹¹⁷

On 25 February 1949, Marton publicly expressed his solidarity with the bishops of the Uniate Church who had been arrested during the previous autumn. Four months later, on 22 June, he was detained at Teiuș station after celebrating mass at Șumulea near Miercurea Ciuc. After being held in the Ministry of the Interior in Bucharest, he was moved to Sighet Prison in 1950. He was released on 6 January 1955 but confined to his residence in Alba Iulia for a further six years. As late as 1969, a visiting journalist was not allowed to meet him and was told that he 'avoided visitors'.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, he did manage to ordain priests for all the dioceses, since he was the only bishop with the authority to do so, and he retained his dignity throughout his ordeal. Fluent in Romanian, he was also widely admired and cherished by Uniates to whose bishops he consistently gave moral support while they were in jail and to whom he gave practical help when they were released.

A relaxation in the regime's hostility towards the Church was evident from the permission given in 1972 by the Department of Cults for the consecration of a Catholic bishop. This may have been a gesture of goodwill towards the Vatican in anticipation of the visit which Ceaușescu made on 26 May 1973 to the Holy See. After the arrest of Bishop Marton and then of the temporary administrator of the diocese, the Hungarian Antal Jakab was secretly chosen to take over but the authorities soon learned of this and promptly detained him as well. He spent the thirteen years from 1951 to 1964 in prisons and on forced labour in a lead mine. Years later Jakab was appointed as Marton's co-adjutor with the right of succession in 1971 and was consecrated bishop in Rome in 1972.¹¹⁹ A few months after retiring at the age of eighty-three, Marton died on 29 September 1980. To assist Jakab, Lajos Balint, another Hungarian, was allowed to be appointed auxiliary bishop

¹¹⁷R.L. Braham (ed.), *Genocide and Retribution: The Holocaust in Hungarian-ruled Transylvania*, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983, p. 24.

¹¹⁸J. Broun, 'The Latin-Rite Roman Catholic Church of Romania', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 12, no. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 171.

¹¹⁹Jakab was born at Chilieni in Transylvania on 13 March 1909. After studies in Alba Iulia and Rome, he was ordained as a priest in 1934. When northern Transylvania was awarded to Hungary, he became Secretary of the General Vicariate in Cluj and Professor of Canon Law at the theological seminary there.

of Alba Iulia, and when Jakab retired in March 1990 Balint replaced him. Jakab died on 5 May 1993.

The see of Iași, however, remained vacant, despite Vatican efforts to fill it. Ion Duma, the bishop consecrated in secret by the nuncio O'Hara, was arrested on 5 December 1951 and upon his release in 1955, sent to a town in the south-west of the country, far from Iași. In his absence, Father Petru Pleșca took it upon himself to try to run the diocese until his death in 1977; in recognition of his efforts, the Holy See consecrated him bishop during a visit he made to Rome in December 1965. The Vatican, however, had failed to give advance warning to the Department of Cults in Bucharest and, in retaliation, the Department refused Pleșca recognition; he was named instead titular Bishop of Fico.¹²⁰ After his consecration, Pleșca was continually harassed by the *Securitate*. He was interrogated almost daily, his mail was censored and he was consistently denied permission to send a pastoral letter. The Vatican was only allowed to appoint as his successor an 'assistant' (*ordinarius adiutor sanctae sedis*) with authority to confirm but not to ordain. He was Father Petru Gherghel. The frosty relations between Rome and Bucharest were exemplified by the absence of a Romanian delegation at Pope John Paul II's investiture.

The absence of a charter defining the Catholic Church's status within Romania meant that there was no legal instrument to which the Church could hold the Department of Cults in attempting to curb its interference in its activities. The Department could at least argue that it had some right to interference since it paid one-third of priests' stipends, but these themselves were meagre and the Department often moved priests from parish to parish to prevent them from becoming settled. Difficulties in training and ordination reduced the provision of new priests to parishes which had remained unserved as a result of the arrest of the incumbent in the early 1950s. Two seminaries were reopened during this decade, Alba Iulia, where teaching was in Hungarian, in 1952 and Iași, where it was conducted in Romanian, in 1956, but their intake was strictly limited, that of Iași being six per year. The restriction eased in the late 1960s, with Alba Iulia being permitted to admit 150 students; these included applicants from the other dioceses it had to serve: Oradea, Satu Mare and

¹²⁰Broun, p. 172.

Timișoara. This relaxation in conditions should not imply that harassment of priests had eased in any way. Several foreign visitors in the 1980s found priests fearful of talking to them and the fate of two priests explains why. Ion Ecsy, rector of Seikenburg Marian Church, was believed to have been murdered by the *Securitate* on 9 April 1982.¹²¹ Father Geza Palfy was reliably reported to have been arrested in Odorhei by the *Securitate* at Christmas 1983 for having suggested that Christmas Day should be a public holiday; he was brutally beaten and then left to die in hospital in Tîrgu Mureș without proper medical care. The autopsy records were kept secret, while the death certificate claimed that Palfy died of liver cancer.¹²²

Amongst some Romanians, the identification of the Catholic Church with the Hungarian minority was an extra reason for being apprehensive about contacts with it; this author well remembers a visit made in September 1987 to Alba Iulia in the company of a group of Romanian historians. They entered the Romanian Orthodox cathedral there with enthusiasm, whereas the invitation to move on to the Catholic cathedral was spurned by all except one, Professor Pompiliu Teodor from Cluj. The contrasting condition of the cathedral buildings offered an instructive comment on the respective status of the two Churches. The Orthodox cathedral, which admittedly was only sixty years old, was well lit and heated whereas the centuries-old Catholic one was dark, cold and dank, and rent by a gaping crack over the west doorway.¹²³ An attempt to find a priest, aided by Professor Teodor, proved futile, but a Hungarian parishioner did engage in conversation, complaining about the lack of service books. Until 1976 the only prayer book in Hungarian allowed into the country by the Department of Cults was a revised lectionary, copies of which were imported through the efforts of Bishop Marton in 1973. Unlike other denominations, Catholics got no Bibles till 1980, when 10,000 New Testaments were imported from Paris.

¹²¹*Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹²²D.B. Funderburk, *Pinstripes and Reds*, Washington, DC: Selous Foundation Press, 1987, p. 75.

¹²³I drew Cardinal Hume's attention to the state of the cathedral in a letter to him dated 20 April 1988. His immediate reply of 22 April indicated that he would 'approach the Holy Father's representative in this country and we will see if between us we will come up with some ideas'.

Alongside obstacles to worship were placed obstacles to organisation. All church communications, such as pastoral letters, had to be submitted to the Department of Cults for approval and no study courses or charitable activities were permitted. Nevertheless, according to Franz Augustin, 80 per cent of Catholics attended mass regularly.¹²⁴ Until 1978, the government forbade the celebration of the mass in Romanian, except in Bucharest and Moldavia, so as to deter the banned Uniates from attending the Latin-rite church in Transylvania in preference to the Orthodox; the change in policy resulted in large attendances among Uniates at the Romanian mass in the Catholic cathedral of St Michael in Cluj and was the first sign of a recognition by the regime that suppression of the Uniate Church had failed to eradicate the faith.

In spite of the illegal status of the Uniate Church, the clandestine bishops sought to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful in Transylvania by offering blessings in homes. As some Uniate clergy have conceded, a relative tolerance was manifested by the Ceauşescu regime towards their church in the 1970s. The surveillance of priests was relaxed and many were allowed to conduct mass in private homes without being harassed.¹²⁵ Their perseverance and fidelity to their confession, like that of the titular bishops who had died in prison or continued to be held in confinement, provided an inspiration to the Uniate faithful. It was the Orthodox Church which remained more sensitive to a possible Uniate regeneration. In 1981, the Orthodox synod protested to the Vatican at Pope John Paul II's consecration of Father Traian Crişan as secretary of the Congregation for the Canonization of Saints. Because Father Traian was a Uniate priest from the diocese of Cluj-Gherla, it claimed that this was a provocative act since the Romanian Uniate Church no longer existed. Crişan responded by pointing out that his appointment was to the *Curia* and not to any position within the Uniate Church.¹²⁶

Working outside the law inevitably affected the Uniate Church's capacity to act in a co-ordinated manner and occasionally un-

¹²⁴Broun, p. 177.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹²⁶S.A. Prunduş and C. Plaianu, *Cardinalul Alexandru Todea*, Cluj: Ordinul Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, 1992, p. 36.

canonical acts were committed. On 25 April 1985, Auxiliary Bishop Ioan Dragomir of Maramureș died. Before his death, he had unilaterally consecrated three bishops for the dioceses of Cluj–Gherla, Maramureș and for the vicariate in Bucharest. The consecrations were regarded by the surviving auxiliary bishops, Chertes, Ploscaru and Todea, as unlawful, and after Dragomir's funeral it was agreed by the bishops that Todea should take over the function of Metropolitan of the Uniate Church.¹²⁷ Todea now took on a more public role, accepting invitations to officiate at funerals and often walking at the head of the cortège. He convened meetings of Uniate priests at Cluj and his actions, coinciding with the hope engendered by Gorbachev's *glasnost*, gave real impetus to a demand for the restitution to the Church of its rights.

Above all, it was from a lady in Cluj that this demand was given most authoritative expression. Doina Cornea was one of the Uniate faithful. In September 1988, a letter addressed to Pope John Paul II and signed by Cornea, her son Dr Leontin Juhas and four other members of the Uniate faith – Viorica Hecia, Puiu Neamțu and Dan and Gina Sâmpăleanu – was broadcast on Radio Free Europe, appealing for the Pope's help in restoring the rights of their Church in Romania:

In spite of the official declarations from the Romanian authorities that there were no longer any Greek Catholics in this country, we wish to reaffirm our existence before the Holy See and the whole world and request at the same time your support in maintaining it and restoring its rights to it.¹²⁸

Their appeal had been prompted by a proposal from the Romanian authorities that former Uniates join the Roman Catholic Church, most of whose faithful were Hungarians, and that services in Romanian be introduced. The proposal would, in turn, dismay the Roman Catholic Hungarians, concentrated in urban areas, whose churches would be invaded by Romanian-speakers: 'As Romanian Uniates, we do not want to intrude, disturb the peace

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹²⁸ D. Cornea, *Scrisori deschise și alte texte*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991, p. 86. An English translation of part of the letter can be found in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 1989), pp. 363–4.

or cause disorder in these churches, which belong by right to our Hungarian brethren in the faith.'

Although Cornea and her colleagues did not say as much, the intrusion of Uniate Romanians into the Roman Catholic Church would have inevitably resulted in an erosion of its Hungarian character; this was doubtless one of the principal objectives behind the proposal. Acceptance of it would, according to the signatories, result in the Catholic Church losing about a million believers:

These would be former Uniates in rural areas who would be assimilated into the Orthodox Church by force of circumstances simply because, in these areas, there were only Orthodox priests who had been sent after 1948 to officiate in the former Uniate churches. At the same time, the former Uniate churches would be lost, together with all the property attached to the parishes, as would the cultural institutions founded by the Uniate church.

In fact, as has already been shown, assimilation and loss of property had already taken place but Cornea defiantly ignored this and reaffirmed its claims: 'We ask that the Uniate Church be given back all its rights that its property be restored and that its spiritual, cultural, and historical merits, acquired over three centuries of tormented existence, be recognised.'¹²⁹

Within eighteen months, Cornea's wishes were partly satisfied. After the Revolution of December 1989, one of the first measures taken by the Council of the Front for National Salvation was Decree-Law Number 9 of 31 December, which restored official recognition to the Uniate Church. The question of Uniate property held by the Orthodox Church has yet to be resolved; the provisional government did promise under Decree Number 126 of 24 April 1990 to restore all the state-owned properties, except estates, that had been confiscated from the Uniate Church but it left unaddressed the question of property confiscated by the Communist government in 1948 and handed over to the Orthodox Church. President Ion Iliescu has declared that this question must be resolved by negotiations between the two Churches, whereas the Uniate view, as expressed by Cardinal Todea, is that since it was the state that took Uniate property and gave it to the Orthodox, so it

¹²⁹Cornea, pp. 87-8.

is the state which must take it back and return it to its rightful owner.¹³⁰

Doina Cornea was virtually unique in combining in her person dissent on political and religious grounds whereas in a previous challenge to the regime's totalitarianism, that alliance had been forged between individuals. Paul Goma's challenge to the regime in 1977 acted as a rallying call to all those who were prepared to register a protest against Romania's abuse of human rights and it is not without significance that one of the prominent signatories of his letter was a Baptist pastor, Pavel Nicolescu.

The Baptists were one of the Protestant denominations who were increasingly subjected to official harassment after 1970, alongside the Pentecostals, the Adventist, the Reformed Adventists and the Brethren (also known as Christians After the Gospels). Although no policy guidelines have been produced to explain this increase in persecution, it is probably no coincidence that an increase in the 1960s and early 1970s in Protestant membership, which was drawn mainly from amongst the Romanian population in Transylvania, was seen by the Ministry (after 1970 the Department of Cults), and, of course, by the First Directorate of the Department of State Security to which the Ministry reported, as a threat to the cohesion of the Romanian nation whose unity and indivisibility were essential features in the projection of Ceaușescu's expanding personality cult. A guarantor of that cohesion was the Romanian Orthodox Church, which was deliberately promoted as virtually an established Church with a privileged position and, in this guise, as a symbol of Romanian national identity.

The Baptist Church was recognised by the government in the August 1948 Law of Cult. However, the new statutes regulating their activity, agreed with the Romanian Baptist Union in 1950, reduced the number of their communities and pastors. The Baptists were required to notify the Ministry of Cults of the candidates for baptism and gain their approvals but the leaders of the Union were satisfied so long as churches remained open, even if only for services held at a time specified by the Ministry. The period of 'relaxation' came to an end with the suppression of the Hungarian

¹³⁰ Address of Cardinal Todea delivered on 15 September 1991 in Cluj' in Prunduș and Plaiănu, p. 109.

uprising in 1956. Large numbers of believers, mainly from Transylvania, were arrested and charged with conspiracy against the state and some, such as the group known as the *Moisiștii* from Arad who were identified with their alleged 'leader' the minister Vasile Moisesescu, were accused of 'pro-Hungarian nationalism'.¹³¹ Despite these arrests the congregations clung to their faith and when ministers were released in the general amnesties of 1962-4, which liberated at least 12,000 'political' prisoners, they found an energetic flock, eager to reopen those churches which had been closed.

The strength of Baptist congregations grew rapidly throughout the late 1960s and prompted the government to take measures against the church. The Baptist seminary in Bucharest was closed by government order between 1968 and 1971, and at the end of 1973 only twelve of the eighty resident places were taken up. At the same time, there were only 150 full-time ministers and the majority of local churches depended on lay ministers.¹³² One of those ministers, Iosif Țon, a teacher at a Baptist seminary, decided in 1973 to press the Department of Cults to relax the restrictions imposed upon his church. In a paper presented to the Department, he listed them: the Baptists could not appoint pastors without approval from the Department of Cults; baptisms could only be performed with similar approval; and church finance, church leadership and church membership were also subject to government control.¹³³ In reply, the Department pointed to the Baptists' acceptance of the 1948 Law of Cults which regulated their activity and claimed that it had to implement the law in order to prevent the proselytisation of one faith by another. This was a clear reference to the growth of the Baptist community amongst Romanians at the expense of the Orthodox Church.

Țon countered the last point by reminding the Department that the law guaranteed a citizen's right to change from one denomination to another and expressed this view that the Department was deliberately applying a policy to stop the spread of the Christian faith, a spread represented by the dramatic increase in Baptist membership. Following the presentation of Țon's reply,

¹³¹ Scarfe, 'Romanian Baptists', p. 15.

¹³² Beeson, *Discretion and Valour...*, p. 305.

¹³³ Scarfe, 'Romanian Baptists', p. 16.

the Department of Cults made some concessions in its implementation of the Law of Cults but did not formally announce these changes. To justify itself, the Department argued that, in consultation with the Baptist Union, it had been in the process of addressing the issues raised by Țon. Services were held more regularly and the practice of referring appointments of pastors and notifying baptisms to the local inspector of cults was abandoned. Even the vindictive removal of Țon in April 1974 from Bucharest to a small Baptist church in Ploiești failed to puncture the Baptists' confidence.

Țon's successful stand in 1973 encouraged a renewal of spirit among the Baptists. A growing number of pastors refused to be intimidated, probably discovering an inner freedom after accepting the cost of being a practising Christian.¹³⁴ The change of spirit was reflected in the joint protest of Baptist, Brethren and Pentecostal believers in May 1974 at the arrest and imprisonment of Vasile Rascol, who was sentenced to two years in prison for distributing Bibles. The authorities responded by ordering the detention of the leading signatories of the protest, Țon, Aurel Popescu and Pavel Niculescu, who were then interrogated and had their personal papers and books confiscated. The *Securitate* also questioned hundreds of other Baptists but no charges were brought and Țon and his colleagues were released.

By 1975, Baptist numbers had grown to an estimated 160,000, with 10,000 of those being new recruits in the latter year alone; yet the dramatic increase in membership was not matched by a proportionate rise in the number of ministers or preaching halls. There is no doubt that the courageous stand taken by several ministers in defence of the right to worship in the early 1970s, in contrast to the acquiescence of most, although by no means all, of the Orthodox clergy, and the publicity abroad for it which was broadcast back to Romania by Radio Free Europe and the BBC, not only attracted new members to the Baptist church but also encouraged Christians from other denominations to speak out about their own problems.

Further disclosures of the harassment to which Baptists and other Protestants had been subjected were made in March 1977 when a group of six prominent pastors and laity issued a twenty-

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

seven-page report. It give details on how Decree no. 153, initially introduced in 1970 to cover hooliganism and juvenile delinquency, was invoked to justify the detention of Protestants for questioning and the imposition of fines. Under the provisions of Paragraph 1 of the decree, 'citizens who establish groups expressing through their activities parasitic, anarchistic attitudes contradictory to the elementary principles of socialist legality, as well as citizens who support such groups, are liable to be prosecuted, fined or subjected to other forms of punishment'.¹³⁵ In 1972, Baptists in the county of Alba and Pentecostalists in the county of Cluj were charged under this law and fined. In 1975, approximately 200 members of the First Baptist Church in Timișoara were fined a total of 30,000 *lei* under Decree Number 153 for visiting the new premises of the church. In Rădăcănești in the county of Vrancea, the local police raided the house of a Baptist where a meeting was in progress in January 1977 and removed the worshippers to the town hall. On 20 February, five of the worshippers – Gigel Filip, Vasile Crimana, Sterian Sava, Mihai Olteanu and Dumitru Mocana – were fined under the Decree on the charge of being 'members of the Baptist church and singing songs from Baptist books without authorization'. The books in question had been printed officially in Romania.¹³⁶

Among members of Protestant groups arrested in this period were Ghejan Titu, sentenced to six years' imprisonment in 1975 for refusing to undergo combat training in the army on Saturdays, Ion Mocuța, imprisoned for six years in 1968 for sending reports to foreign radio stations which alleged that Seventh Day Adventists were being jailed and beaten, and Dumitru Blidaru from Topleț in the county of Caraș-Severin, who was tried *in camera* in October 1975 for 'spreading anti-state propaganda' after writing to Ceaușescu about the persecution of Protestants and sent to the Dr Petru Groza psychiatric hospital in Bihor.

The six pastors and laymen who distributed the March 1977 report were arrested on 3 April 1977.¹³⁷ They were allegedly interrogated for 10 to 12 hours daily until 30 April; Ton and

¹³⁵ *Romania: Forced Labor...*, p. 30.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹³⁷ They were the Baptist pastors Iosif Ton and Pavel Nicolescu, Baptist teachers Aurel Popescu and Radu Dumitrescu, a Brethren layman Dr Silvia Ciotea, and a Pentecostalist minister Constantin Caraman.

Pavel Nicolescu had their heads knocked against a wall by members of the *Securitate* and were repeatedly struck in the face, stomach and testicles by boxers from the *Dinamo* sporting club, a club sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior. Ţon's wife said that she and her five-year-old daughter were questioned for twenty-four hours without a break by the *Securitate* and that she herself was told that if her husband did not recant over the report, he would be killed.¹³⁸ Nevertheless, the signatories were released in May 1977, only to be rearrested in the autumn and threatened with charges of homosexuality and internment in psychiatric prisons. Dumitrescu was given a passport and emigrated, while the others were dismissed from their posts or had their preaching licenses suspended. International attention to the plight of these Protestant believers was drawn by Bernard Levin in two articles in *The Times* (London) on 16 and 18 June 1978 which he wrote to coincide with Ceașescu's state visit to Britain. As a result, the Bașa family, who had suffered persecution for being members of the Pentecostal Church, were granted their wish to emigrate in a cynical decision which was timed to give Ceașescu a measure of international goodwill.

This was the only concession the regime made to public opinion abroad. In May 1978, a number of Protestants, including Pavel Nicolescu and Iosif Ţon, formed a movement called 'the Romanian Christian Committee for the Defence of Freedom, Religion and Conscience'. In July, they sent an appeal signed by twenty-seven members to the Department of Cults requesting recognition of a number of religious denominations declared illegal since 1948, notably the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church, the reformed Seventh Day Adventists and the Lord's Army. They called for freedom of worship and religious education in schools. Shortly afterwards, a number of the signatories were detained and beaten. In September 1978, nine of the Committee's members were expelled from the officially approved Baptist Union on the grounds that they had formed an 'illegal group' and in the following month, a further three, Petru Ciocîrteu, Ionel Prejban and Nicolae Radoi from Caransebeș, were sentenced to several months' imprisonment on charges of causing a public disturbance, even though witnesses

¹³⁸ *Romania. Forced Labor*, p. 33.

stated that the three had been attacked by the police.¹³⁹ During the summer of 1979, eight Seventh Day Adventists were arrested for printing and distributing religious literature. According to police statements, the group had printed 10,000 copies each of fourteen different titles, mainly on state printing presses.¹⁴⁰

A threat of psychiatric internment was made in 1978 to Traian Dors after he compiled and circulated a document among members of the Lord's Army community, estimated to number about 150,000 adherents, criticising the treatment of religious believers and requesting recognition of the Army. The Lord's Army was an evangelical group set up in Sibiu by an Orthodox priest by the name of Iosif Trifa in 1923, which drew its support exclusively from Romanians, mainly peasants from northern Moldavia. Trifa wanted to maintain the spirit of Orthodoxy, while at the same time creating a more personal faith among believers; he and his associates, both priests and laymen, devoted themselves to a more intense spiritual activity. They met several times a week for prayer, Bible studies and preaching but a struggle for control of the movement within the Orthodox Church led to the defrocking of Trifa. In 1948, the Lord's Army asked to be recognised as an independent denomination but was declared illegal and its priests arrested, among them Cornel Rusu from Simeria and Traian Dors from Beiuş. Both were released in 1952 but were re-arrested a few months later, together with Ioan Opriş from Călan near Hunedoara, Serghei Paraschiv from Moldavia, Alexandru Codruţ from Nămolosa near Galaţi, Vasile Axinuţa from Lişna near Dorohoi and others. They were released in 1954 but in 1958 there was a further wave of arrests following the internal clamp-down which accompanied the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

The leaders of the Lord's Army were trapped by a typical ploy of the authorities. Further to their request for legal recognition, Dors and Sergiu Grossu submitted a draft statute listing twenty-two regional group leaders. The arrest of all those named followed immediately and they were brought to trial in Cluj on a charge of belonging to 'an anti-state group' and sent to prison. Dors served a further six years in jail before being released in the

¹³⁹ *Romania Human Rights Violations in the Eighties*, London: Amnesty International, 1987, p. 6.

¹⁴⁰ *In Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 8 (1980), p. 61.

general amnesty of 1964 but he was then confined to the town of Beiuș and remained under constant surveillance.¹⁴¹

Even after the amnesty, persecution of the Lord's Army continued. In 1965, three members were arrested after a meeting held in the Banat and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. Fines were regularly imposed on members. Orthodox priests suspected of sympathising with the Army received warnings from their bishops and one, Ștefan Gavrilă, was even suspended for having introduced into his parish the greeting 'Praise the Lord', commonly used by members of the Army.¹⁴²

Harassment of Baptists also continued throughout the 1980s. One example concerned the closure on 15 October 1984 of the Baptist church in the village of Găujani in the county of Vâlcea. The lay pastor Petru Popescu, who built the church, was fined and denied his rations of fuel and food because his identity card was confiscated. On 26 April, he was arrested and imprisoned for two months.¹⁴³ Assertion of the right to freedom of religious worship was made most forcibly by the Baptists and other Protestant groups.

Despite being constantly watched and followed, the Baptist pastor Pavel Nicolescu visited the Orthodox priest Gheorghe Calciu

¹⁴¹ A. Scarfe, 'The Evangelical Wing of the Orthodox Church in Romania', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 3, no. 6 (November–December) 1975, pp. 15–.

¹⁴² A. Scarfe, 'The "Lord's Army" Movement in the Romanian Orthodox Church', *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1980), p. 316. A fate similar to that of Traian Dors had been shared by Pastor Richard Wurmbrand before his release from Romania in 1964 by an evangelical group in Norway. Born to Jewish parents, Wurmbrand converted to Christianity as a young man and was ordained as a Lutheran pastor in Bucharest in 1940. His defiance of Iron Guard attempts to close his church led to his arrest on three occasions and to beatings by the police, and prepared him for what was to come under the Communists. After the war, he renewed his connections with the Western church missions in Bucharest, and for this reason was arrested in February 1948. He spent more than eight years in various prisons before being released in the amnesty of 1956, but was re-arrested in 1959 and served a further five years in custody until the general amnesty of 1964. After Wurmbrand's release, a Christian group in Norway negotiated with the Romanian authorities for him to be allowed to leave the country and raised \$2,500 for his 'ransom'. In May 1966, he testified before a United States Senate Committee in Washington to his experiences in prison and stripped to the waist to show eighteen torture wounds on his body. R. Wurmbrand, *In God's Underground*, London: W.H. Allen, 1968.

¹⁴³ In *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 14 (1986), p. 88.

in prison after his arrest in 1979. A year earlier Calciu had been expelled from his teaching post at the Orthodox seminary in Bucharest after preaching a series of sermons in the church of Radu Vodă calling on the young to reject atheism:

Freedom means, at a social level, the contest of ideas, while in Christ it means liberation from sin and death. In our country, atheism has a course which is imposed and is more and more limited. It rests on the authority of the state. Faith is in full flight, for it is a fact of life. Authoritarianism enslaves, life liberates.¹⁴⁴

Calciu was arrested on 10 March 1979, sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for 'propagating Fascist ideology' and sent to Aiud prison. He was released on 20 August 1984 following widespread international pressure but was confined to a small village near the Bulgarian border. He was later allowed back to Bucharest but not permitted to leave it. In a letter which was made public outside Romania in June 1985, Father Calciu described the restrictions imposed upon him:

For months there have been three militiamen stationed day and night in the entrance hall of the block where we live, another three at one end of the street and another three at the other end. They check anyone who comes who the entrance hall and accompany them to the flat they wish to visit; if [they say] they are coming to our home, their names are recorded in a register and, with the exception of relatives and very close friends, they are forbidden to come up. Three *Securitate* cars, each with two or three police in them, are stationed day and night near our building, and when we go out into town – even for bread or milk – at least six of them come with us, shoulder to shoulder, so that we don't exchange a word with anyone. People who innocently greet us have their identities checked and are threatened and forbidden to have any contact with us.¹⁴⁵

Other opponents of the regime were treated in an identical manner, among them Doina Cornea, the veteran Communist Silviu Brucan

¹⁴⁴G. Calciu, *Șapte cuvinte către tineri*, Munich: Ion Dumitru, 1979, p. 25.

¹⁴⁵*Romania: Human Rights Violations*, p. 25.

and the poet Mircea Dinescu. Such police pressure led Father Calciu to apply to emigrate, and on 5 August 1985 he was allowed to leave the country with his family.

Father Calciu proved exceptional among Orthodox priests in his defence of Christian values. Although he was not the only priest of his denomination to speak out about problems of worship, examples of Orthodox protest were isolated and inevitably invite comparison with the defiance of the Protestant groups.¹⁴⁶ It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Orthodox believers were not well-served by their leaders under Ceașescu; the leaders' compliance with the regime can of course be explained by the privileged position and the freedom to worship which they enjoyed, and they expressed their gratitude for that privilege in the ritual adulation of Ceașescu. Sycophancy towards Ceașescu became commonplace among the Orthodox hierarchy, spawning declarations in which black was presented as white. Charity dictates that two examples suffice. The first is the birthday telegram sent by Patriarch Teoctist to the Romanian President in January 1989 which gave thanks to him for creating 'the climate of complete religious liberty for all confessions in our country'.¹⁴⁷ The second is the congratulatory message sent by the Holy Synod to mark the fifteenth anniversary of Ceașescu's election as President. The prelates expressed their thanks to him for

...your personal and constant concern for the unending growth of the country's economic strength...for the ardent activity which you, as the greatest and most brilliant hero of peace,...carry out for the victory of mankind's ideals of freedom and progress...for the atmosphere of complete religious freedom

¹⁴⁶ Lesser known but forthright expressions of concern about the restrictions imposed upon Orthodox clergy were made by Father Ștefan Gavrila and Father Costică Maftei in Bucharest. The latter was brought from a rural parish to the Bucharest parish of Titan, a newly developed area on the outskirts of the capital. In spite of having 300,000 parishioners, Maftei was unable to obtain permission for a new church to be built and was forced to conduct his ministry from his flat. In 1978, Maftei wrote to the West drawing attention to his plight. Article in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 7 (1979), p. 60.

¹⁴⁷ 'Telegramă', *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year CVII, nos 1-2 (January-February 1989), p. 4.

which you have ensured for the religious groups of our homeland.¹⁴⁸

Whilst reprehensible in itself, this toadying to the regime was surpassed in its infamy by the silence of Orthodox prelates in the face of the destruction between 1984 and 1989 of eighteen churches as part of Ceauşescu's plan to rebuild the centre of Bucharest. There were, however, isolated protests from the Orthodox clergy. Dr Ion Dura, a priest appointed by the patriarchate in Bucharest to assist Romanian communities in the Benelux countries and based in Brussels, addressed an open letter dated 29 October 1987 to the Secretary-General of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. Dura condemned the demolition of a large numbers of churches which had taken place since 1984 and warned that further destruction, including that of the cathedral of the Romanian Orthodox patriarchate in Bucharest, was planned. Dura ended his letter with this appeal:

Do not allow, Mr Secretary-General, the fear of some 18 million Romanian Orthodox believers that their patriarchal cathedral [will be razed] to turn into sad reality. Please do everything within your powers in order that the faithful may render glory to God...in the confidence that their venerated churches will be safe forever from destruction.¹⁴⁹

Quite understandably, Dura did not seek to return to Romania and the very fact that his protest had come from outside the country is testimony to the fear stalking his masters in Bucharest. But if this fear can be offered as an explanation from the silence of his fellow priests in Romania, it cannot excuse the failure of other Romanian Orthodox priests serving abroad to speak out.

If this silence was a hallmark of acquiescence to the regime, Patriarch Teoctist's telegram of support for Nicolae Ceauşescu, published on 20 December 1989, just three days after the shootings in Timişoara, served as an outrageous act of validation. The telegram congratulated Ceauşescu on his re-election as Party leader at the November Party Congress and praised his 'outstanding activity' and 'wise and far-seeing guidance'. It hailed the 'golden age which

¹⁴⁸ *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 1989), p. 365.

¹⁴⁹ *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian SR/1 (13 January 1988), p. 43.

justifiably bears your name and its achievements which will endure for thousands of years'.¹⁵⁰ Needless to say, there were retrospective efforts to erase the record of the telegram, for in the December 1989 issue of the official bulletin of the patriarchate, printed some months later, there was no mention of it; instead there appeared a message from the Holy Synod of the Church denouncing the destruction of churches by 'the bulldozers of the tyrant Ceaușescu' and expressing solidarity with the National Salvation Front!¹⁵¹ Old habits certainly die hard. Any grain of honour Teoctist might have gained on 18 January 1990 by bowing to public pressure and resigning was lost within two months when he was recalled, a sign that perhaps the Orthodox hierarchy were unable to find any prelate less compromised. Teoctist's reinstatement was proof of a poverty of morality and eloquent testimony to a church badly compromised by total servility to a despot.

¹⁵⁰ 'Telegrama', *România liberă*, 20 December 1989, p. 3.

¹⁵¹ *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Year CVII, nos 11-12 (November-December 1989), p. 4.

DISSENT

It follows from the extent of compliance in Ceaușescu's Romania that dissent was a rare phenomenon. How rare open dissent among intellectuals was during Ceaușescu's rule is suggested by an affirmation made to Michael Shafir in the early 1980s. 'Romanian dissent', he was told, 'lives in Paris and his name is Paul Goma.'¹ This is, as Shafir recognises, an exaggeration but it is symptomatic of the relative absence of challenge to the regime's authority in Romania until the 'Goma affair' broke out in the spring of 1977. Goma's plight represented the sum of Western awareness of Romanian dissent during the late 1970s. The platform for Goma's exposure of human rights abuses in Romania came from the signing in 1975 of the Final Act of the CSCE (the Helsinki Agreement). Article VII of the 'Declaration on Principles Guiding Relations between Participating States' bound the signatories to 'respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion'.² Ceaușescu's signature on this agreement, together with Romania's ratification a year earlier of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, provided instruments in international law to which the Romanian regime could be held to account. But the direct stimulus for Goma's action came from the example of the Charter 77 movement in Czechoslovakia, which itself took inspiration from the Helsinki process.

Goma was born in Bessarabia in 1935 to two schoolteachers. His father was arrested by the Soviet authorities after their annexation of the province in 1940 and upon his release two years

¹ M. Shafir, *Romania: Politics...*, p. 168.

² K. Sword (ed.), *The Times Guide to Eastern Europe*, London: Times Books, 1990, p. 249.

later, the family made their way to Romania and settled in Bucharest. Goma had been arrested in 1951 on suspicion of intending to join anti-Communist guerillas based in the Carpathian foothills but was released after eleven days' detention and joined the Communist Youth Movement. In 1954, he was admitted to the School of Literature and Literary Criticism in Bucharest where in 1956, during a seminar, he read out part of a novel he had written in which the hero sets out to establish a students' movement similar to that in Hungary. He was promptly arrested on the charge of attempting to organise a strike at Bucharest University and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. On release, he was exiled to a village east of Bucharest where he spent four years in compulsory confinement. Unable to resume his studies because he had been a political prisoner, he took a number of manual jobs until a decree of 1965 reopened the doors of universities to former detainees. He enrolled in the faculty of arts at Bucharest University but left within a year.

In the euphoria accompanying Ceașescu's defiance of the Soviet Union in August 1968, Goma joined the Communist Party. Several months earlier he had submitted for publication the manuscript of his first novel *Ostinato*, based on his experiences at the hands of the security police, but the reader claimed to recognise Elena Ceașescu in one of the characters and a ban was placed on further publication of Goma's writings. *Ostinato* appeared, nevertheless, in German translation in 1971, and as a result its author was dismissed from the Party. During the summer of 1972, he was allowed to visit France where he wrote *Gherla*, which drew on the time he spent in the prison of that name in Transylvania. Denied publication in Romania, it appeared in French translation in 1976.

Frustrated by the ban of his writings and encouraged by the initiative of Pavel Kohout in Czechoslovakia, Goma wrote a letter to Kohout and the other Charter 77 signatories in January 1977, expressing his solidarity with their movement.³ Exasperated by his failure to attract support amongst his friends for this letter, he wrote a few days later to Ceașescu inviting him to sign it. This letter is one of the most revealing contemporary testimonies

³ For the original text, see *Limite*, nos 24-5 (September 1977), p. 9. This issue is largely devoted to the Goma affair and contains a chronology of events leading up to his arrest as well as the texts of letters of support.

to the attitudes buttressing the acquiescence to authority and highlights the significance of the appeal to national sentiment in deflecting criticism, upon which Ceaușescu and his sycophants drew so often:

Mr Ceaușescu,

For a month now, since the publication of Charter 77 in Prague, I have been striving to persuade my acquaintances to show solidarity with the action of the Czechs and Slovaks. But without success. Some openly refused, honestly admitting that showing solidarity comes under article such and such of the Penal Code; others did not know the article, but knew the *Securitate* from inside; yet others, somewhat more courageously, agreed to sign a letter of solidarity but with an indecipherable signature; lastly, others suggested we wait a little, to see what happens in the meantime; if the Charter 77 action succeeds, then perhaps we will get a few crumbs of their success; if not, we have lost nothing, we have no gains, but we will not suffer the consequences that the Czechs will have to bear.

Please believe me when I say that my fellow citizens' attitude upset me: all our neighbours are active, they are demanding the rights due to them, even the Russians (and we know who they are...) are screaming that they are not free and that their rights are being trampled upon. Only we Romanians stay silent. And we wait. For everything to be given to us on a plate. Our Romanians think only of what they will lose if the *Securitate* finds out, not of what they will gain, despite the *Securitate*. An acquaintance, a pure-blooded -Escu, insulted me profoundly and not only me. Do you know what he said to me? He said: 'Look, you are getting worked up in a particular way and you want to do certain things which are not characteristic of the Romanian; therefore you are not a Romanian!' 'What do you mean?', I asked, wounded to the red, yellow and blue of our flag. 'It's true, my grandfather on my father's side was Macedonian (Goma), my grandmother on my mother's side was Greek (Cuza); it's true that I also have some Polish blood on my paternal grandmother's side, but what matter? What counts is that I feel Romanian. Because I was born in Romania (in the county of Orhei), because my mother tongue is Romanian, because my maternal grandfather was called Popescu and because (and with this I shut him up!)

I spent time in prison here, above and below my beloved homeland!' 'O.K., let's say that you are a Romanian', -Escu conceded, 'but you don't behave like a Romanian.' Well, I flew into a rage and asked him straight: 'Really? But what about Ceașescu? Is he not a Romanian? On the contrary, he's very Romanian and in spite of this he went to Prague on 15 August to assure Dubček of the Romanians' solidarity. And although he was a Romanian, he vehemently condemned the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops from the balcony of the Central Committee building, saying that what they did was shameful!' That's what I said to him. To which he replied: 'Well, just ask Ceașescu what you asked me: for a signature on your letter of solidarity with the Czechs!'

Mr Ceașescu,

I realise that your august signature will never accept a place alongside the signature of a simple citizen, one who is, on top of that, an untalented writer. And even if this miracle occurred, what could be done *with just two signatures*? My wife could sign as well but that wouldn't change anything; if thirty Hungarians could be found, then proportionately about ninety Romanian signatures would be necessary. Let's say fifty or at least ten. But where are they going to come from? I already told you: the Romanians are afraid of the *Securitate*. It emerges that in Romania, only two people are not afraid of the *Securitate*: you and me. But, as I already said, with only two signatures...

There is, however, a solution: individual solidarity. I have sent a letter with my own signature. Only my gesture will not dispel the fear of our fellow citizens of joining those who ask for rights which are ultimately for ourselves. The situation would be completely different if you would send a similar letter, a declaration of support for Charter 77. I am firmly convinced that millions of Romanians will follow you, and will show solidarity with the Czechs and Slovaks. By doing this, you will show that you are consistent with your declarations of 1968, you will prove that you are fighting for Socialism, democracy and mankind. That's the first thing. The second is that Romania will be able to participate at the Belgrade Conference with its head held high.⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10 (author's translation).

Shortly after sending this letter Goma persuaded seven others (Adalbert Feher, a worker; Emilia and Erwin Gesswein, instrumentalists in the Bucharest Philharmonic Orchestra; Carmen and Sergiu Manoliu, both painters; Ana Maria Năvodaru, a translator and the wife of Goma, and Șerban Ștefănescu, a draughtsman, to sign with him an open letter to the thirty-five participating states at the CSCE Belgrade Conference which had signed the Helsinki Final Act. This letter drew attention to human rights abuses in Romania and the government's failure to respect its international undertakings in this domain. The open letter was an unprecedented act. Goma's protest, which subsequently attracted the signatures of over 200 Romanian citizens, despite a campaign of intimidation carried out by the Department of State Security against Goma and the other initial signatories,⁵ was the first publicly disseminated criticism of the regime within Romania since the imposition of Communist rule.

This courageous move was immediately denounced by Ceaușescu. On 17 February, he delivered an ill-tempered speech attacking 'traitors of the country', which was clearly a reference to Goma's two letters; at ten o'clock that same evening, the writer began to receive a string of threatening telephone calls. Every telephone call of support was interrupted whereas those containing insults and threats went undisturbed. On 18 February a police cordon was thrown up around the block of flats where Goma lived and only residents were allowed through. Passports were given to the Gessweins and to Carmen and Sergiu Manoliu, but Goma and his wife refused this 'offer' to emigrate. On 22 February, Goma was invited to a meeting with Cornel Burtică, Secretary for Propaganda of the Central Committee. Burtică took him to task for saying that 'Romania was under Romanian occupation', pointing out rather inconsequentially that the standard of living had risen immeasurably since the Second World War. He tried to buy Goma off by promising to speed up the publication of a translation made by Goma's wife and to offer Goma work as a reporter. When tackled about the measures taken by the *Securitate*, Burtică replied that Ceaușescu had issued 'specific orders that no action should be taken'.⁶

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

This was clearly untrue and an attempt to distance the President from the punitive actions taken against Goma whilst at the same time portraying Ceaușescu as a moderate and reasonable man. It is true that on the following day, the police cordon around Goma's block was relaxed and more people were able to get through to sign his letter but at 8 o'clock in the morning, a worker named Vasile Paraschiv, who had signed the letter and returned to see Goma, was arrested by the police and taken to the *Securitate* headquarters and beaten. On 27 February two other signatories, a Baptist pastor Pavel Nicolescu and a draughtsman Gheorghe Sandu, were arrested as they were leaving Goma's apartment.

On 1 March, Goma sent a second, more admonitory letter to the President which was profoundly prophetic. He urged Ceaușescu not to break that bond that his condemnation of the invasion of Czechoslovakia had created with his people. He was in danger of doing so because of the actions of the *Securitate*, who were

... the traitors and enemies of Romania, who produce nothing and prevent those who produce from producing more... It is time for you, Mr President, to look at what is happening in our garden. It is time for you to remember that those leaders who have been concerned only with painting the fence and have left the garden to be overrun by weeds, have been excluded from the notion and reality of being leaders of a people. It is time for you to reconcile foreign policy with internal policy. It is time for you to return to us, among and with us.⁷

On the same day, Goma's telephone ceased to ring; however, when he lifted the receiver, he could hear Radio Bucharest and the voices of eavesdroppers complaining that their connections were faulty. On the following day, the psychiatrist Ion Vianu brought Goma a letter expressing his support. Vianu had published an article the previous October in the Writers' Union journal *Viața Românească*, pointing out the ways in which his discipline was being abused by the regime. On 3 March, the literary critic Ion Negoițescu wrote to Goma expressing his support. By now,

⁷ *Ibid.*

seventy-five signatures had been gathered. On 12 March Goma was summoned again to Burtică's office, where he was offered the chance to publish; Goma declined, arguing that he would still be followed by the *Securitate*. Burtică again claimed that Ceaușescu had given orders that nothing should befall Goma but still Goma refused. How shallow Burtică's guarantee was became evident a week later when Horst Stumpf, a former boxer, broke into Goma's apartment and attacked him. Despite being summoned, the police did not appear. Stumpf repeated the attacks on two occasions just a few days later. Goma was interviewed on 28 March by French television network 'Antenne 2' reporter Henri Gallais as he was barricading himself in his apartment with the help of some fellow signatories whose numbers had now risen to 180.

At the beginning of April a veritable campaign was launched in the Romanian press against capitalism, unemployment and the rise of Fascism in the West. This followed closely on Goma's arrest on 1 April, news of which only percolated to the West ten days later. Goma's silence was attributed to the cutting of his telephone and therefore his friends did not investigate it further. On 2 April Vianu was brought by *Securitate* officers to the amphitheatre of the Institute of Pharmacy in Bucharest, where he was subjected to the anger and abuse of 200 people, led by the rector, who dubbed him a 'bandit', a 'Fascist' and a 'pig'. He was dismissed from the Institute and from the hospital at which he worked. Goma was attacked in the literary weeklies which appeared on 8 April. Eugen Barbu called him 'a nullity' in *Săptămîna*, Nicolae Dragoș accused him in *Luceafărul* of 'trying to rouse reactionary elements, individuals ruled by an aversion to the successes of our order, elements which have nothing in common with literature'. In *Contemporanul* Vasile Băran does not mention Goma by name but his target is equally obvious when he castigated 'individuals calling themselves writers and journalists who sully with the dirtiest of dirt our noble profession'. On the following day, Goma was expelled from the Writers' Union.

In the mean time Ion Negoitescu was detained for questioning by *Securitate* officers and under pain of a charge of 'homosexual practices' being brought against him, retracted his support of Goma,

signing an article about patriotism in *România literară* on 14 April. Two other signatories, Ion Ladea and Gheorghe Sandu, were savagely beaten by *Securitate* interrogators. Within a few days, international concern about Goma's arrest snowballed, with appeals for his release being made by, among others, Eugen Ionescu, Jean-Paul Sartre, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. The growing chorus of protest threatened to overshadow the centenary celebrations of Romanian independence upon which Ceaușescu set great store; his image as the plucky defender of that independence against the great Russian bear to the north was losing some of its gilt as a result of the Goma affair, and on 6 May 1977, four days before the anniversary, Goma was released from custody. After persistent official harassment, he was allowed to leave Romania with his wife and child on 20 November 1977.

Their settlement in Paris did not, however, remove them from the long arm of the *Securitate*. Goma's successful defiance of the regime clearly rankled with the security police and their foreign intelligence arm, the CIE, assumed the task of silencing him and other critics. Goma was one of three Romanian *émigrés* to whom parcel bombs were sent from Madrid in February 1981. On 13 January 1982, Matei Pavel Haiducu, a CIE agent based in France to carry out industrial espionage, allegedly received orders from the CIE head, Lieut. Gen. Nicolae Pleșiță, to murder both Paul Goma and another dissident writer, Virgil Tănase, by injecting them with a special poison designed to provoke cardiac arrest. Instead of obeying orders, Haiducu turned himself over to the French authorities. Haiducu's account of his mission reveals that the order to kill came not from Ceaușescu but from Pleșiță in a desire to ingratiate himself with the President.⁸ Pleșiță's motive says much about the irritation felt by Ceaușescu at Goma's constant sniping at him from Paris, and the plot was clearly designed to send a warning signal to other Romanian-born critics of the regime. At the same time it advertised to the French public at least (Haiducu's revelations received little mention in the English-language press) the fact that state-sponsored terrorism was an arm of Ceaușescu's policy. Goma, quite inadvertently this time, did as much to tarnish Ceaușescu as he had done through his courageous stand in 1977.

⁸ M.P. Haiducu, *J'ai refusé de tuer*, Paris: Plon, 1984.

It was only a few months after Goma's individual stand that Ceaușescu was faced with the first serious collective protest against his economic policies. The miners' strike of 1977 in the Jiu Valley was the most important challenge posed by a group of workers to Communist power in Romania since the spate of protests in Bucharest, Iași and Cluj, triggered by the Hungarian uprising of 1956. The first eye-witness account of the strike was given in an interview with Radio Free Europe on 17 July of that same year by Istvan Hosszu, a miner from the Jiu Valley who left Romania in 1986. This remains a more detailed account than the one given in a brief interview after the revolution by one of the strike leaders, Ioan Constantin (Costică) Dobre, a pit brigade chief from the Paroseni mine.⁹

The strike was sparked off by legislation introduced in July 1977 ending disability pensions for miners and raising the retirement age from fifty to fifty-five. Miners in the Lupeni Mine decided to strike in protest at this decision and Hosszu, who worked in a neighbouring mine, decided to see for himself what was happening at Lupeni. He arrived on 1 August to find some 35,000 miners crammed into the grounds of the mine and straining to hear Dobre, an engineer from the Lupeni mine G. Jurcă, and a woman whose name Hosszu did not recall, who was head of the Union Communist Youth in Lupeni. According to Hosszu, these three attempted to calm the spirits of the miners who were demanding a meeting with Ceaușescu. The crowd then began to chant, 'Lupeni 29!' 'Lupeni 29!', a reference to the miners' strike of 1929 at Lupeni, which had been used by Communist propaganda as a symbol of the labour struggle against capitalism. There was no sign of the mine manager or of the *Securitate* and it seemed to Hosszu that this was a deliberate ploy by the authorities to avoid inflaming the situation. Dobre and Jurcă agreed that the former, being a miner and therefore closer to his colleagues (Jurcă was an engineer), should draw up a list of the miners' demands and present them to a mass meeting at the Lupeni mine. The list included a reduction in the working day from eight to six hours, a restitution of retirement at fifty, a reassessment of the criteria for sick leave, employment for miners' wives and daughters, the recruitment of competent medical personnel to

⁹ *România liberă*, 13 January 1990.

work in the mines and the objective presentation by the media of the strike.¹⁰ Dobre put these points to the mass meeting on 3 August and they were approved unanimously.

Ceaușescu hastily convened a government commission to deal with the crisis and it was decided to send Ilie Verdeț, the member of the Political Executive Committee responsible for the economy, Constantin Băbălău, the Minister of Mines, Clement Negruț, the mayor of Petroșani, and Ghinea, the mayor of Lupeni, to talk to the miners. They no doubt intended to persuade the miners to call off their strike but they were not given the opportunity to do so. They were jostled by the miners and even punches were thrown as they tried to make their way to the mine manager's office. Verdeț was told that the miners had no confidence in him since he had deceived the Central Committee over the true situation in the Jiu Valley and was instructed to contact Ceaușescu with the demand that the Secretary General should come to Lupeni to discuss the miners' grievances directly with them. To this end Dobre, Jurcă and the anonymous woman from the Communist Youth decided to transfer Verdeț to the Palace of Culture in Lupeni, from where he could call Ceaușescu on a special line. There, under the supervision of a group of miners, Verdeț repeated the words he had been told to say: 'Please come immediately, the situation is serious!' To prevent any further details being passed on and to make Ceaușescu realise that Verdeț was effectively a prisoner, one of the miners in the escort hung up the receiver.

Ceaușescu arrived the same day in a convoy of black cars which tried to force a passage through the masses of miners. They failed and Ceaușescu was forced to get out of his car and make his way to the mine manager's office amid chants of 'Ceaușescu and the miners', 'Ceaușescu and the people', which Dobre had persuaded the miners beforehand to utter as a sign of confidence in the Party leader. According to Hosszu, Ceaușescu was totally taken aback by the sight of so many protesters. His eyes darted from right to left and he was clearly shaken by the scene. When he reached the offices, Dobre asked the crowd whether they should first let the Secretary General speak or whether the

¹⁰ 'La grève des mineurs roumains en 1977. Un témoignage', *L'Autre Europe*, 11–12 (1986), p. 156.

list of their grievances should be made known. The miners opted for the latter and these were read out in front of the strikers.

Ceauşescu then took the microphone from Dobre's hands and in a trembling voice declared: 'Comrades, this is not the way... this is a disgrace for the entire nation... a disgrace! I have taken note of your grievances.' He went straight to the point of the demand for a shorter working day. In an attempt to distort the reasoning behind the decision to extend it, he claimed that it had in fact been the Party leadership which had resolved to reduce working hours but that this decision had met with opposition from the miners. This insult to the miners' intelligence prompted the reply: 'It is not us! Bandits, thieves!' Ceauşescu then proposed that the shorter programme be introduced gradually at the Lupeni mines and extended to other pits. This suggestion was met with the chant 'A six-hour day from tomorrow'. Ceauşescu became visibly angered, surprised by the audacity of people who dared to express their point of view in his presence. He descended to the level of threats: 'If you do not go back to work we'll have to stop pussyfooting around!' Prolonged booing and the cry of 'Down with Ceauşescu!' met these words, and it was only when Dobre appealed for calm and urged the miners to let the Secretary General finish what he had to say that the atmosphere became less charged. Ceauşescu seized the opportunity to strike a more conciliatory note, conceding a reduction in the working day to six hours throughout the whole Jiu Valley and agreeing to build factories which would offer work to miners' families. He promised that no retaliatory measures would be taken against those who had organised the strike and that all of those who were to blame for the miners' discontent would be brought to account. After these promises were made, the miners dispersed and some even returned to work on the evening shift of 3 August. But the next day, in spite of Ceauşescu's promises, the Jiu Valley was declared a 'restricted area', the army sent in and the *Securitate* began their work of repression. An investigation was launched to discover where the core of support for the strike lay, and in the months following the strike some 4,000 miners were moved to other mining areas, while some were said to have been sent to labour camps on the Danube-Black Sea canal.

Father Gheorghe Calciu, a dissident priest who was imprisoned between 1979 and 1984, claimed in an interview in 1985 to

have met miners in his various places of detention. Even the fate of the miners' leaders was unclear; two of their most prominent spokesmen, Dobre and Jurcă, were rumoured to have 'disappeared'. According to some of his friends, Dobre died in a car accident stage-managed by the *Securitate* on 27 October 1977 and his colleague was the victim of a similar accident a month later. When tackled on this subject by the International Labour Office, the Romanian authorities claimed that the two men never existed. However, immediately after the Revolution of 1989, Dobre resurfaced and disclosed that he and his family had been picked up by the *Securitate* on 30 August 1977 and given forced domicile in the city of Craiova.¹¹ Most of Ceașescu's other promises were not respected either: the eight-hour day was re-instated; only those miners who had worked underground for more than twenty years were allowed to retire at fifty; and as for the media, they said nothing about the strike. The only concessions made were in the provision of improved medical care in the mines and in the creation of jobs for the miners' families.

The failure of the Romanian media to report the Jiu Valley strike epitomised its total subservience as a tool to be manipulated by the regime and illustrated the blackout tactics used by the authorities throughout the post-war era to stifle the passage of potentially 'harmful' information to the populace. Access to information is just as essential for the individual to defend himself or herself against authority as is manipulation of it for the government to protect itself. This control of the media and the 'sanitising of news' was very effective in containing protest and in inculcating a sense of isolation and frustration amongst protestors. It also played a self-fulfilling role: if no opposition to the regime was reported, then most of the public not only assumed that there was none but, guided by this assumption, questioned the point in displaying any.

Despite this negative attitude, there were courageous if spasmodic

¹¹ *România liberă*, 13 January 1990. In an interesting twist to Dobre's fate, he was posted to the Romanian Embassy in London in the spring of 1990 and shortly afterwards, requested political asylum of the British authorities. How he managed to secure the posting at that particular time begs a number of questions about his relationship with the Romanian authorities. In a book based on Istvan Hosszu's revelations, Dobre is mentioned not as Ioan but as Constantin. Z. Csalog, *Borton volt a hazam*, Hosszu Istvan Beszel, Budapest: Europa Könyvkiadó, 1989.

attempts by groups of manual workers to challenge authority. In January 1979, a group of fifteen workers from the naval yards in the Danube port of Turnu Severin approached a Dr Ionel Cană, a general practitioner who had worked in Olt county amongst workers and had recently moved to Bucharest. Dr Cană had acquired a reputation for helping workers to draw up petitions complaining about labour conditions and he agreed to the men's proposal to set up the SLOMR (Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania). The founding declaration was broadcast over Radio Free Europe on 4 March 1979 by Noel Bernard, the head of the Romanian section, and the union attracted more than 2,400 signatures of support from workers in towns such as Ploieşti and Constanţa, and Hungarian workers in Tîrgu Mureş and Timișoara. The dissident Orthodox priest Gheorghe Calciu offered to be a spiritual adviser. The group circulated a manifesto calling for the legalisation of unofficial trade unions and observance of the right to free association. In April, the union, in an open letter to Ceauşescu, protested against the arrest of its members, among them Cană and an economist, Gheorghe Braşoveanu, the latter being confined to a psychiatric institution in March. Cană's successor as chairman, Nicolae Dascălu, was sentenced in June to eighteen months in prison for allegedly passing state secrets to Amnesty International.¹²

In October 1981, workers went on strike in the open cast mines of Leurda, Lupoaia and Horăşti, near the town of Motru in the south-west of the country. There were reports in the foreign press of attacks on public buildings in the town but no information was forthcoming about the aftermath of the strikes.¹³ Nature, as well as workers, was against the regime. A severe earthquake in 1977 and floods in 1980 and 1981 had disrupted industrial production and reduced the exports of foodstuffs which Ceauşescu now looked to in order to reduce the foreign debt incurred through industrialisation. In late 1981, Romania's foreign debt rose to \$10.2 billion and Ceauşescu requested its rescheduling. On the recommendation of the IMF, imports were reduced and

¹² D. Deletant, 'Romania' in G. Arnold *et al.*, *Revolutionary and Dissident Movements: An International Guide*, Harlow: Longman, 1991, p. 280.

¹³ For these and the following details of labour unrest see Vladimir Socor, 'Recurring Workers' Protests', *Romanian SR/13, RFE Research*, vol. 12, no. 47 (27 November 1987), pp. 5-9.

exports, especially of machinery, equipment and petroleum products, increased. The implications of this reduction of imports was not fully appreciated by foreign analysts at the time, since in 1981 Romania was a net importer of food from the West (food imports from the West in that year totalled \$644 million and exports \$158 million). In the same year Soviet statistics show that Romania exported 106,000 tonnes of frozen meat to the Soviet Union. Cutting back on food imports while at the same time continuing to export meat to the Soviet Union forced Ceaușescu to introduce meat rationing.

More important, the very act of having to accept conditions from the Western banks was a great blow to the Romanian leader's inflated pride. He declared defiantly in December 1982 that he would pay off the foreign debt by 1990, and to achieve this, introduced a series of austerity measures unparalleled even in the bleak history of East European Communist regimes. Rationing of bread, flour, sugar and milk was introduced in some provincial towns in early 1982, and in 1983 it was extended to most of the country, with the exception of the capital. The monthly personal rations were progressively reduced to the point where, on the eve of the 1989 Revolution in some regions of the country they were two pounds of sugar, two pounds of flour, a half-pound pack of margarine and five eggs.

At the same time, heavy industry was also called upon to contribute to the export drive but because its energy needs outstripped the country's generating capacity, drastic energy-saving measures were introduced in 1981, including a petrol ration of 30 litres per month for owners of private cars. Other strictures stipulated a maximum temperature of 14° C. in offices and periods of provision of hot water (normally one day a week in flats). In the winter of 1983, these restrictions were extended, causing the interruption of the electricity supply in major cities and reduction of gas pressure during the day so that meals could only be cooked at night. During the severe winter of 1984-5, it was calculated from medical sources in the capital's hospitals that over thirty children had died as a result of unannounced power cuts affecting incubators.

It was against this background of hardship that miners in seven metal mines in the Maramureș region of northern Transylvania went on strike in September 1983 in protest at wage cuts introduced

under a new wage law. Security police were sent in to break up the strike. The growing economic hardship imposed on the country by Ceaușescu sparked off more strikes in the Transylvanian cities of Cluj and Turda in November 1986. Following a reduction of the daily bread ration to 300 grammes per person and pay cuts of up to 40 per cent for failure to fill output targets, Romanian and Hungarian workers went on strike at the Heavy Machine Plant and the Refrigeration Plant in Cluj and at the glass factory in Turda. Leaflets in both languages demanding 'meat and bread' and 'milk for our children' circulated in Cluj, thus demonstrating inter-ethnic solidarity. Party officials rushed food to the factories and promised to meet the workers' grievances, whereupon the strikers returned to work, but just as in the Jiu Valley in 1977, the *Securitate* launched an investigation into the organisation of the strike and several workers were moved to other areas.

Within three months, unrest had spread to the east of the country, encompassing for the first time in decades both workers and students. Once again, wage cuts imposed for failure to meet production targets and food supply problems were the trigger. On 16 February 1987, some 1,000 employees at the Nicolina rolling stock works in the Moldavian capital of Iași marched on the Party headquarters, protesting at the pay cuts. Their demands were quickly met. On the following day, in what appears to have been an uncoordinated action, several thousand students from the university and polytechnic marched through the centre of the city in protest at the power and heating cuts imposed in student hostels, chanting 'We want water to have a wash and light to be able to study'. The authorities again gave in and no repressive action was taken against the students. At the Nicolina plant, however, 150 of the most prominent strikers were dismissed after the customary *Securitate*-directed post-mortem.

Behind this string of protests against Ceaușescu's economic policies lay the introduction of draconian measures designed to reduce food and energy consumption, as well as wage reductions. Yet instead of heeding the warning signs of increasing labour unrest, Ceaușescu plunged blindly forward with the same measures, seemingly indifferent to their consequences. A sign that the cup of privations had filled to overflowing came on 15 November 1987 in Brașov, the country's second largest industrial centre. Here is an eyewitness account of events on that morning from

a Hungarian visitor (the population is now over 80 per cent Romanian but formerly had significant German and Hungarian elements):

It was about eleven as we were crossing the main square of Brașov, on our way to the bus station. The shouting we heard was like that at a football match but we realised this was no sports event when we could clearly make out the name of Ceaușescu being shouted over and over again. We stopped opposite Party Headquarters. Between 300 and 350 people were milling about in front of the building, watched by a steadily growing crowd of onlookers. We joined this crowd and observed the events. Romanian-speaking friends translated the slogans being chanted: 'HOTI' (the thieves), 'JOS CU CEAUȘESCU' (down with Ceaușescu), 'LIBERTATE ȘI DREPTATE' (freedom and justice), and 'MUNCITORII LUP-TATORI' (the fighting workers).

The banner-waving crowd consisted mainly of middle-aged, poorly-dressed people in working clothes and fur hats; quite transparently they had come to negotiate. The workers standing before the gateway expected to be properly received, and wanted to send a delegation ahead. No one received them, though the apparatchiks were still in the building. On this day there were local elections in Brașov; voting is compulsory and the workers had gathered, in the first place, to cast their votes. Those inside the building, terrified by the slogans and the rising emotions of those in the square, fled through the back of the building.

The first sign of the crowd's impatience was the tearing down of the sign 'Brașov Party Headquarters'. There was a moment's silence. The building remained silent. The workers attacked the ground-floor windows, smashing them in with stones and their flag-poles. Meanwhile, a group of fifty or so workers rammed the wooden gate until it broke open. Within minutes, the crowd was moving from floor to floor, smashing windows and throwing pictures, posters, radios, telephones, files and papers out into the crowd. A small group appeared by the gateway, bringing cheese, margarine and bread by the sackful, and it began distributing them to the crowd. The crowd went wild. In theory, these foods are rationed, but they had in

fact, been quite unobtainable for months, even on ration-cards.

On the second floor a portrait of Ceaușescu could be seen in the bay of a window; a man was using his body to rip up the canvas and shatter the fame. Behind him, a fur-hatted worker's sweeping gestures motioned the crowd to go in; many did so. Pictures, office equipment and furniture from inside were set alight. Everything was burnt but there was no fire inside the building. Painted on its walls was the slogan 'LIBER-TATE ȘI DREPTATE'.

Finding no one to negotiate with, the crowd set off for the People's Council building opposite, the Romanian and the red flags held high. By now there were some 5,000 people in the square. Here it was much the same story: the sign outside the building was torn down and its windows smashed in, its elaborate cornicing destroyed. The crowd met no resistance and it was all over in fifteen minutes. Chairs and files were thrown out into the square and set on fire.

Now sirens could be heard. The crowd of onlookers drew back; the more active core of workers stayed where they were. Three fire-engines appeared and the firemen prepared to extinguish the pyres burning in front of the building. Hemmed in by the crowd, they could not get through and rapidly withdrew. Within five minutes, two more fire-engines appeared; when persuasion failed, the firemen were beaten off with stones and chair legs. Meanwhile, the building had emptied and the crowd would have gone back to the Party HQ. However, two armour-plated military vehicles carrying armed soldiers had entered the square. This was enough for the crowd to begin to disperse. In one corner of the square, trucks unloaded more armed soldiers with dogs.

The onlookers, ourselves included, tried to escape from the cordon thrown round the square. The soldiers let some through but others were beaten up and dragged away. By now it was about one o'clock. Later, it transpired that the majority of the more active workers were arrested on the spot while the rest were carried off from their homes in the middle of the night.

On Sunday night, armed convoys patrolled the blacked-out city. There was no public transport. The army was on emergency stand-by; parts of the city centre were sealed off. The locals

said that the protesters came from two Brașov factories. In the tractor factory, the workers had received only 60 per cent or less of the wages due on the 10th of the month while in the truck factory no one had been paid at all. The protest on the day of the local elections had begun as a demand for unpaid wages. On Monday, the factories had come to a standstill. On Tuesday, all outstanding wages were paid and work resumed in the afternoon. By Tuesday, there was even food in the shops, as evidenced by queues up to 25 metres long for bread, milk and other essentials. Those in the queues were much amused by the sight of glaziers heading for the main square. Weeks later I heard that workers' meetings in the local factories had condemned the troublemakers and voted for the dismissal and prosecution of those who had taken part in the protest. It was this that prompted me to publish this account.¹⁴

This account provides the essential details of events that Sunday. The trouble started only five days after the implementation of a decree by Ceaușescu reducing heating quotas for domestic consumption by 30 per cent and instituting punitive charges for exceeding the quotas. Coming on top of the imposition of wage cuts for the second consecutive month for failure to meet production targets (they could not be met because of a shortage of orders since the internal market was stagnant and there had been a drop in exports) and chronic food shortages, particularly of potatoes, an essential part of the diet of Brașov's inhabitants, the heating restrictions were the last straw for the working population. Several thousand workers at the *Steagul Roșu* plant (workforce 22,000) came off the night shift and assembled, ostensibly to vote in the local elections taking place across the country that day. They marched off from the plant at about 9 a.m. in the direction of the Party headquarters in the centre of the city, singing the anthem of the revolution of 1848, '*Deșteaptă-te, române*' ('Awake, Romanian') and chanting 'Down with the dictatorship' and 'We want bread'. They were joined by workers from the Brașov tractor plant (workforce 25,000) and by many townspeople as they made their way to the city centre where they forced their way into the Party headquarters as described above. A number of arrests

¹⁴ I am grateful to my colleague Peter Sherwood for drawing my attention to this account and for translating it from Hungarian.

were made after the disturbances. A list of seventy-four workers who were released after the 1989 Revolution appeared in *România liberă* on 9 January 1990.

The fact that this protest took place in a major industrial centre whose production of lorries and tractors is largely for export and whose workers were formerly amongst the best paid in Romania showed to what depths discontent with Ceauşescu's policies had sunk, a fact highlighted not only by a leading dissident but, more startlingly, also by a former leading member of the RCP. Mihai Botez, a mathematician and erstwhile economic adviser as well as a prominent critic of Ceauşescu, issued a statement emphasising that the protests signalled a 'rejection of the leadership's economic and political strategies' and constituted 'a severe warning to the leaders' from the working class. Botez warned that 'repression would be the costliest option, with disastrous implications for the country'.¹⁵

Even more significant and unprecedented was the intervention of Silviu Brucan, deputy editor of *Scînteia* from 1944 to 1956 and Romanian ambassador to the United States (1956-9) and to the United Nations (1959-62). On the evening of 26 November, Brucan invited two Western journalists, Nick Thorpe from the BBC World Service and Patricia Koza of UPI, to his house and handed them a statement to Western correspondents in Bucharest invoking the authority of the Party and alerting Ceauşescu to the fact that 'a period of crisis has opened up in relations between the Romanian Communist Party and the working class'. After a rise in the standard of living in the 1960s and 1970s, 'the situation of the workers has deteriorated and the explosion in Braşov is a sign that the cup of anger is now full and the working class is no longer prepared to be treated like an obedient servant'. He warned that 'repression may result in total isolation, this time not only from the West but also from the East'.¹⁶ Excerpts from Brucan's declaration were broadcast the following evening on BBC World Service News and the whole text in Romanian was transmitted on the BBC Romanian Service, Radio Free Europe

¹⁵ V. Socor, 'The Workers' Protest in Braşov: Assessment and Aftermath', *RFE Research, Romania Background Report* /231 (4 December 1987), p. 3.

¹⁶ S. Brucan, *Generația Irosită*, Bucharest: Editurile Universul & Calistrat Hogaș, 1992, pp. 168-9.

and Voice of America, thus enabling millions of Romanians to hear for the first time a warning to Ceașescu delivered from a senior Party figure.

One collective manifestation of support for the Brașov workers was reported in the Western press: on 22 November several hundred students at the city's polytechnic held a meeting of solidarity with the workers. By contrast, the Romanian media kept quiet about the demonstrations of 15 November and the concomitant arrests. But this blanket of silence was lifted by foreign journalists who revealed that the city was being patrolled by troops with dogs and that cordons had been thrown up around the Party headquarters. The first official acknowledgement, albeit an indirect one, of the disturbances came on 2 December when Radio Bucharest reported that an extraordinary meeting of workers' representatives at the Red Flag lorry factory had 'unanimously' resolved to dismiss the management. The communiqué ascribed to the meeting stated that those workers 'who engaged in acts that are alien to our society' were to be moved or 'brought to account in accordance with the law'.¹⁷ In a cynical attempt to deflect responsibility for the protests (although these were not directly mentioned) from Ceașescu, the management was accused of 'unlawful' wage reductions and a telegram was addressed by the meeting to the President, expressing its 'complete attachment to the internal and foreign policies of the Party and State'.¹⁸ At the time the telegram was published, the investigations which the *Securitate* had begun on the day after the protests at the two factories had already led to the detention of some 200 workers. An underground Committee to Support the Detainees, set up in December 1987, claimed to have compiled a list of 425 workers, among them several women, who were being held. In the middle of the month, a group trial was held in Brașov at which some sixty 'demonstrators' were sentenced to terms ranging from one to four years' imprisonment for 'hooliganism'.¹⁹

Signs that Ceașescu was severely shaken by the Brașov disturbances were evident in his decisions to postpone the National

¹⁷ Socor, 'The Workers Protest', p. 4.

¹⁸ *România liberă*, 3 December 1987, p. 1.

¹⁹ V. Socor, 'Repressive Measures Against Protesters', *RFE Research, Romanian SR/1* (13 January 1988), p. 25.

Party Conference by a week and not to attend Mikhail Gorbachev's briefing for Warsaw Pact leaders in East Berlin but to send his Foreign Minister instead. At the same time, in order to prevent further criticism of the regime at a time of unrest, prominent dissidents were detained or placed under house arrest in early December. They included Doina Cornea, the university lecturer from Cluj dismissed from her post in September 1983 for having used Western philosophical texts in her lectures, and her son Leontin Juhas, who together with Cornea distributed a leaflet outside Cluj factories expressing support for the Braşov workers. Others who were either confined to their homes or arrested were Mihai Botez's wife Mariana Celac, an urban planner who was a critic of the urban and rural resettlement programme; Ion Puiu, a veteran National Peasant Party politician and critic of the regime; Florian Russu, the leader of the outlawed National Peasant Party youth group; Radu Filipescu, a young electronics engineer who had been sentenced in September 1983 to ten years' imprisonment for printing and distributing anti-Ceauşescu leaflets, then released in April 1986; Nicolae Stăncescu and Ion Fistioc, both Party members who had submitted proposals for reform to the leadership and to the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest with the request that they be forwarded to Gorbachev; Nelu Prodan, a young Baptist, and Gabriel Andreescu, a thirty-six-year-old geophysicist who sent an open letter to a human rights conference sponsored by Solidarity in Cracow at the end of August 1988 calling on Romanian citizens to adopt a policy of non-cooperation with the regime and to 'refuse to go along with harmful decisions by the authorities'.

Steps were also taken to silence Silviu Brucan. After his declaration was broadcast, he was effectively placed under house arrest. Two policemen were posted outside his house and another two placed at the end of his street to stop diplomats and reporters from approaching his home. His telephone was cut off and Brucan was told by a senior officer that he could only leave the house once a day, in the morning, to go shopping. When he did leave, he was accompanied by four plain-clothes *Securitate* officers who discouraged anyone from talking to Brucan. After two weeks, he was summoned by the head of the Party Control Commission, Ion Constantin, who reprimanded him for making a declaration 'hostile to the Party and to the country' and for choosing 'the worst imperialist news agencies to make it to'. Brucan replied

by saying that the two agencies were those to whom Ceașescu had granted interviews on numerous occasions and that he considered it his duty to defend the workers every time that their demands were legitimate. Accused of being a traitor to the Party and the country by another official present called Catrinescu, Brucan countered by asking him about his background. 'I worked at a metal factory during the war', replied Catrinescu. 'Then you served the German war machine', retorted Brucan, 'and you dare to call me a traitor!' With this exchange, Catrinescu ended the meeting, accusing Brucan of being unreasonable.²⁰

The restrictions on Brucan remained in place but it was an illustration of the ambivalence of their application that Brucan managed to pass a second statement to the American press agency, UPI, on 11 December. During a 1988 visit to London, Brucan told this author in a conversation on 13 November that one of the *Securitate* officers engaged in his supervision had been a student of his at Bucharest University and it was he who had agreed to facilitate the delivery of this statement in which he said that the Party was 'wrestling with the grave problem of worker unrest' and that 'the response will be made public at next week's Party Conference'. Romanian Communists are 'now aware of the dire consequences which repression against the brave workers of Brașov would entail' and for this reason, Brucan would 'refrain from further statements on Romanian affairs'.²¹ Information on the close surveillance under which he was forced to live is revealed in a letter from a close friend of Brucan, dated 8 January 1988, the contents of which were disclosed by Nick Thorpe in a despatch broadcast one week later.

[Brucan's villa] is under tight surveillance twenty-four hours a day by four militiamen in three shifts. No visitors are allowed, not even relatives. No mail whatsoever reached him over the recent period, including Christmas and the New Year, and the only newspaper to arrive has been the Communist Party daily, *Scînteia*. The single stroll he is allowed each morning takes place with two militiamen in front of him, two behind and one on either side... The disconnection of the phone meant

²⁰ Brucan, *Generația Irosită*, p. 172.

²¹ Despatch from Vienna by David Blow, BBC World Service, SSP, XN76, 11 December 1987.

that his wife was unable to call a doctor when she was ill. All for the sake of watching a Marxist and a Party veteran, writes the author. This is the Romanian version of Socialism with a human face, he concludes.²²

Restrictions on Brucan were lifted on 8 February after the visit of John Whitehead, the United States Deputy Secretary of State, to Bucharest. Brucan was invited to a reception hosted by Whitehead at the American embassy on 5 February but was told he could not leave his home by the *Securitate* major guarding him. On the following morning, Thomas Simons, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State who had served at the American embassy in Bucharest in the 1970s and spoke Romanian, tried to visit Brucan, but in spite of showing his passport was denied entry by the *Securitate* officers. Two days later Brucan's telephone was reconnected, the post began to arrive and he was allowed to come and go as he pleased although he was still shadowed at a distance by *Securitate* agents. His freedom of movement was extended to allow him to accept an official invitation to visit the United States and Britain in November 1988, where he presented papers on the 'Crisis of Communism'. At a conference in the United States he was invited to give the same paper in Moscow, and at the completion of his visit to London, during which he revealed his intention to visit Moscow,²³ he flew there and was received by Mikhail Gorbachev and Anatoli Dobrynin, the former Soviet ambassador to Washington. In an account of this meeting Brucan reveals that Gorbachev was in favour of the overthrow of Ceauşescu but on condition that it should be carried out in such a way as to leave the Communist Party as the leading political force in Romania; otherwise – there would be chaos. The Soviet leader was also categorical in his refusal to intervene in Romania. He did, however, agree, on the insistence of Dobrynin, to find a means of protecting Brucan, whose safety he knew to be threatened. The method chosen was to instruct Stanislav Petuhov, the Bucharest *Pravda* correspondent, to maintain regular contact with Brucan.²⁴ The status of his reception in all

²² BBC World Service, CAP, XN36, 8 January 1988.

²³ *The Independent*, 14 November 1988.

²⁴ S. Brucan, 'Întilnirea secretă Brucan-Gorbaciov', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 19 November 1992.

three countries gave a clear signal to Ceaușescu of the favour which Brucan enjoyed, which was all the more powerful because it spanned the ideological divide of West and East. Here was proof of the isolation of Ceaușescu, of which Brucan had warned in his first statement after Brașov, and of the Romanian President's perverse success in uniting West and East against him.

A realisation of the need to improve Ceaușescu's poor image abroad had led to the advance notice given by the State Council in October 1987 of an amnesty and pardon for some convicted offenders which would come into effect two months later on 30 December, the fortieth anniversary of the Romanian Republic. A pardon was given to those prisoners serving sentences of up to five years; those with longer sentences had them reduced. More serious crimes, such as murder, abortion, assault and robbery, were not covered by the decree. Included in the amnesty were those who attempted to leave the country illegally, without a passport. Although some 170,000 Romanian citizens emigrated legally between 1975 and 1986, thousands of others attempted to do so illegally and were arrested. Others less fortunate were shot by Romanian border guards while trying to cross the frontiers into Hungary and Yugoslavia, and an unknown number died attempting to swim the Danube. Unmarked gravestones on the Yugoslav side of the river testify to their efforts.

Clearly, the decree was introduced to influence the United States Congress in its decision of whether or not to suspend Romania's most favoured nation status for six months, yet there were also practical considerations. Overcrowding in Romania's jails, produced by the large numbers of offenders, put pressure on Ceaușescu to take some form of action and the decree of October 1987 was the sixteenth such amnesty since he had become Romania's leader.²⁵ What proportion of these offenders had tried to escape the country was impossible to assess but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that many of the 25,000 young people who were reported to have committed penal offences in 1981 alone were detained for trying to do just that.²⁶

²⁵ P. Gafton, 'Amnesty and pardon', *RFE Research, Romanian* SR/13 (27 November 1987), p. 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

There was no reference to political prisoners in the decree. This was no surprise since the Romanian authorities denied there were any but Amnesty International named some fifteen people held for political offences in a report published in July 1987. Among them were: Francisc Barabas, aged forty a member of the Hungarian minority, who was sentenced to six years' imprisonment in November 1983 (raised to seven years on appeal) for distributing leaflets denigrating Ceauşescu in Miercurea Ciuc; Ion Bugan, aged about fifty, an electrician from Tecuci, who was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in 1983 for having driven through the centre of Bucharest with a picture of Ceauşescu bearing the caption 'We don't want you, hangman'; Dumitru Iuga, aged forty, an electrician from Bucharest who planned an anti-Ceauşescu protest with a small group of students and workers and was sentenced with seven others to terms ranging from five to ten years; and Gheorghe Năstăsescu, a fifty-six-year-old building worker from Iaşi who denounced Ceauşescu in a Bucharest street and was sent to prison for nine years.²⁷

Human rights violations were brought into the very chamber of the relevant UN agency by the case of Dumitru Mazilu, a Romanian official who, after being commissioned in 1985 by the United Nations to compile a report on humans rights and youth in Romania, was prevented from presenting it to the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of the Minorities in Geneva in June 1987. At that time, the subcommittee was told by Romanian representatives that Mazilu, who had been appointed by the Romanian Government to the subcommittee in 1983, had suffered a heart attack and was in hospital but his failure to appear at the subcommittee's session on 8 August 1988 aroused suspicions amongst his colleagues. The Swedish UN Under Secretary General stated that Mazilu had expressed a willingness to continue work on the report and to come to Geneva but that since the authorities in Bucharest would not let him travel, the UN had decided to ask the Romanian Government to receive a UN member to work with Mazilu in Bucharest. The Romanians ignored the request.²⁸

²⁷ *Human Rights Violations in the Eighties*, London: Amnesty International, 1987, p. 12.

²⁸ M. Shafir, 'The Mazilu Riddle: Romanian Official Fails to Appear Before UN Body', *RFE Research, Romanian SR/10* (23 August 1988), pp. 23-33.

There followed the disclosure by the Reuter news agency of the contents of a letter which Mazilu had written in April 1988 to the Chairman of the UN subcommission in which he catalogued the 'arsenal of repressive measures' which had been taken against him since he refused to abandon work on his report in the autumn of 1987. In December of that year, he had been forced to retire from his position as head of the Foreign Ministry's legal department after having spent two periods in hospital; since February 1988, more than twenty policemen had followed him and his family 'day and night'.

Mazilu's assertion that the 'frequent violations of the rights and freedoms of young people in different countries, including my own' made his study absolutely necessary doubtless sounded somewhat hollow to close observers of Romanian affairs in view of Mazilu's record as a servant not merely of the Ceașescu regime,²⁹ but, allegedly, also of the security apparatus. Born in Bacău in 1934, he is reported to have been recruited into the *Securitate* in 1952 and trained as an interrogator. In 1956, when he enrolled at the University of Bucharest for a law degree, he held the rank of Lieutenant Major.³⁰ He completed his studies in 1960 and rose to the rank of Colonel, studied law and obtained a doctorate at Cluj University. According to *România liberă*, he was appointed commandant of the Ministry of the Interior cadet school at Băneasa and later a professor at the Ștefan Gheorghiu Party Academy.³¹ In the early 1970s he was named Deputy Director of the Institute of Political Science and the Studying of the National Question, and in 1974 he became Secretary General of the Romanian Association for the United Nations. In 1981, he represented Romania at the UN session of the General Assembly's Juridical Committee.³²

The UN showed no misgivings about Mazilu's belated metamorphosis and treated his case as a genuine human rights problem in itself. But what proved to be a more realistic, if cynical view, was expressed by the Soviet representative on the subcommission

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *România liberă*, 24 January 1990.

³¹ *Ibid.* 13 January 1990.

³² Details taken from Shafir, 'The Mazilu Riddle', p. 23.

who declared that there was 'no point' in its approving a resolution, asking the Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar to establish 'personal contact' with Mazilu in view of the official Romanian observer's statement that his country would reject any moves implying 'inspection or control'. There could be no greater exposure of the UN's lack of teeth in enforcing respect of its own charter on human rights' observance than this failure to rectify the abuse by a signatory state of the human rights of one of its own committee members!³³

It was little wonder then that Ceaușescu felt that he could act with impunity against the most courageous and honourable of Romania's dissidents: Doina Cornea, a lecturer at Cluj University who was dismissed from her post on 15 September 1983. Cornea was born in Brașov in 1929. In 1948 she enrolled at Cluj University to study French and Italian, and after completing her degree was given a position as a teacher of French at the secondary school in Zalău where she married a local lawyer. In 1958 she moved back to Cluj where she was taken on as an assistant lecturer at the university. Her misgivings about the impact of the Communist regime on Romanian society were first given a public airing in 1982.

At first sight, one might interpret Doina Cornea's string of protests as purely political acts, containing as they did programmes for democratic reform, denunciations of the demolition of villages and expressions of solidarity with fellow dissenters. Yet they also had a deep moral content whose hallmark provides a continuity with the letters she has written since the Revolution.³⁴ At the heart of Cornea's messages stood the belief that every individual should feel responsible for his actions and should recognise that

³³ Mazilu was by no means the first Romanian official charged with carrying out UN duties to be recalled to Bucharest and then refused permission to continue their work abroad. In 1977 Sorin Dumitrescu, a member of UNESCO's Hydrology Department, failed to return to his post after home leave and was forced to sign a letter of resignation. He was allowed to leave Romania in 1978. Liviu Bota, the director of the UN Institute for Disarmament and Research in Geneva, was summoned to Bucharest in late 1985 and not allowed to return. In the wake of strong international protests, he was allowed to resume his post in February 1988. See Shafir, 'The Mazilu Riddle...', p. 25.

³⁴ See the observations of her daughter Ariadna Combes in the preface to Cornea, *Scrisori deschise și alte texte*, p. 7.

any failure to act responsibly had repercussions for society at large. Spiritual and moral regeneration implied a renunciation of a materialist conception of life, and in a series of reflections addressed to the young in 1985 Doina Cornea analysed the part played by materialism in disorientating Romanian society.

It was clear from the very first letter that Cornea sent to Radio Free Europe in 1982 that she was not solely preoccupied with the material problems confronted by Romanians; her concern also lay with the spiritual problems of Romanian society. The crisis facing Romania was in her view as much spiritual as material. In the letter, addressed 'to those who have not ceased to think', she reflected on the deeper reasons for the crisis:

The difficulties which have befallen us have made me think about the deeper causes which have engendered them. In your broadcasts, you invoke most often the immediate causes, for example an economy policy, which is erroneously conceived, the excessive centralisation of power, finally our extremely rigid economic and social system. Living here as a teacher, I glimpse a deeper and more general reason behind this catastrophe; it is the cultural and spiritual devaluation of our society resulting from the imposition of a reductionist and sterilising ideology. I ask myself how we could have reached this state and especially whether each one of us, small and insignificant individuals, does not bear some blame for all of this. If we examine ourselves thoroughly, down to the depths of our soul, will we not find that we have made so many compromises, have accepted and disseminated so many lies?³⁵

In accepting these lies the Romanians had become 'a people without a scale of moral and spiritual values, a people fed solely on slogans', and this process of 'spiritual draining' lay behind all the inadequacies of life. Cornea depicted herself and her fellow intellectuals as 'passive onlookers at a regrettable perversion of consciences' which had led to the replacement of moral values by material ones. This situation could only be reversed by a return to the 'spiritual', which she defined as 'the highest value, one which generated intelligence, ethics, culture, liberty and responsibility'. She called upon her fellow teachers to cease teaching

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

things which neither they nor their students and pupils believed in: 'accustom them to thinking more freely, more courageously, more conscientiously and more generously'.

At the end of her letter Doina Cornea apologised for not revealing her name, on the grounds that she considered it more important to be able to maintain her contact with students. It was due to a misunderstanding that she was named as the signatory when it was broadcast in August 1982 on Radio Free Europe: she had signed the letter simply to show that it was authentic. The revelation of her name had the expected consequences. She was interrogated by officers of the *Securitate* and denounced in a meeting of teaching staff at Cluj University. On 15 September 1983, after twenty-five years as a lecturer in French, Cornea's contract of employment at the university was rescinded by the rector on the grounds that she had given the students the diary of Mircea Eliade to read and that she had said in her classes that Romanian culture ran the risk of being discredited because of the compromises made by the majority of intellectuals.

These details were made public in a second letter sent to the BBC and Radio Free Europe (RFE) in January 1984 in which she protested at the severe restrictions placed upon academic freedom and expressed her sadness that her university authorities had not had the curiosity to find out directly from her what ideals she was attempting to defend in her classes, let alone the courage to defend its employees.³⁶ There followed a steady trickle of texts from Cornea in the form of meditations which were read out on RFE in 1984, 1985 and 1986.³⁷ The question implicit in each of them was: 'How can we Romanians find the path towards that authentic state of inner purity without which life loses all its quality?' Her answer was that in order to gain that inner purity, a moral and spiritual regeneration must take place and this was dependent upon the removal of fear and the abandonment of cowardice. It was cowardice which paved the way to daily duplicity and to collective paranoia. As long as this moral and spiritual regeneration failed to take place, public life in Romania would continue to be contaminated by forty years of perversity. This theme was to be repeated in the message of

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-57.

her post-revolutionary letters: even if the political and economic situation changed, the moral perversity would not without a conscious recognition on the part of the individual of the need to change his or her behaviour and to act accordingly.³⁸

In August 1987, Cornea addressed her first open letter to Ceaușescu. It advocated the need for reform in Romania's educational system which was subservient to political interests. She called for greater autonomy for universities, more academic exchanges with foreign universities, the exemption of teachers and students from extra-curricula duties (such as harvesting in the last two weeks of September), the introduction of religious education and the creation of schools for the handicapped. She supported her argument that the purpose of education was to teach pupils how to think rather than to cram their heads full of facts, by advocating the inclusion in school textbooks of extracts from the writings of distinguished Romanian writers such as Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Emil Cioran and Eugen Ionesco. Whether Ceaușescu was actually made aware of the contents of the letter is open to doubt. No reply was received and no particular further sanction was applied to Cornea by the authorities. However, they did act three months later.

On learning of the workers' riot in Brașov on 15 November 1987, Cornea made some leaflets, which she distributed on 18 November with her son, Leontin Juhas, outside the university and factories in Cluj, called on workers to show solidarity with those in Brașov. They were arrested on the following day and held by the *Securitate* until the end of December when they were released as a result of the public outcry reported in the Western media and, in particular, of a documentary about Romania under Ceaușescu by Christian Duplan, transmitted on French television on 10 December, which contained a previously recorded interview with Cornea. She accompanied her acknowledgement of the part played by the media in her release and her expression of thanks to all those who demonstrated on her behalf in Paris, Geneva and London with a protest against the Romanian authorities' interception of her correspondence, their interruption of her telephone calls and their shadowing of visitors to her house. In

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-201.

short, she concluded, they were doing everything to isolate her and all those who were trying to speak out in the midst of the disaster surrounding them.³⁹

In the summer of 1988, Cornea heard on Radio Free Europe that she had been invited to a human rights conference in Cracow; the letter of invitation never reached her. Her application for a passport to travel was turned down and this rejection prompted her to write a letter of thanks to the conference organisers, offering at the same time a contribution to the possible theme of discussion: 'Why does the opposition movement in the Socialist countries not succeed?' The answer, she wrote, was to be found in the writings of the Romanian philosopher, Constantin Noica (1909-87), who suggested that the individual had been robbed of spiritual fulfilment by the imposition of a totalitarian materialist ideology. This ideology had spawned a social system which crushed the individual, thereby causing the social system to become effete and inefficient, for without pluralism and spiritual diversification, society was condemned to stagnation, mediocrity and uniformity. The members of such societies had, with a few exceptions, been 'contaminated' by materialistic considerations and lacked the courage to challenge the political order.

Both this letter and the following one, known as the 23 August letter, the date of its 1988 transmission on RFE and deliberately timed to coincide with Romania's national day, were smuggled out of the country by Josy Dubie, the director of the programme *Red Disaster* about Doina Cornea and Romania, which was shown on Belgian television on 8 December 1988 and later on French and Canadian networks. The 23 August letter was addressed to Ceausescu and was written by Cornea at the request of two workers, Julius Filip and Dumitru Alexandru Pop, who had founded a free trade union called *Libertatea* (Freedom) and who intended to sign it. (They in fact had already signed a previously written letter composed by Cornea in July as a protest against systematisation but this only reached RFE in early September.) It represented Cornea's political programme and was an outspoken indictment of Ceausescu, whom she held personally responsible for the spiritual and economic disaster hanging over the country.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63-4.

The opening lines presage the blasts of criticism which were to follow:

Mr President of the State Council,

While abuses, repression, corruption, injustice, falsehood and disinformation multiply, the concern, distress and uncertainty of the population grow.

Since your internal and present foreign policy, together with your economic and social policies, put at risk the country's future, its security, its international good name, as well as its physical, moral and spiritual integrity, we dare to address the following plea to you which offers as an alternative two possible solutions to avoid an imminent and irreparable disaster:

(a) Either you should give up, together with the *nomenklatura* which supports you, the running of the country if you are unwilling to change your policies to avoid admitting that they are the wrong ones; such a gesture would indeed be proof of responsibility and abnegation, and the Romanian people would be grateful to you, just as it was grateful when, in the 1960s, you gave it a kind of breathing space and hope;

(b) Or you should introduce some reforms, starting with the principle of democratic pluralism, of separating the administration and judiciary from the Party, of using competence and morality in choosing figures for responsible positions, irrespective of their political affiliation and of liberalising society, the economy, institutions and culture.

The great majority of the population shares this view. Brașov is proof.⁴⁰

Cornea went on to charge Ceașescu with 'damaging and exhausting the most important resources of the people', with 'the spiritual draining of the individual', the 'suppression of individual responsibility, of creativity and of inventivity'. She offered her own programme of political and economic reform, calling upon the Romanian leader to respect the Orthodox Church's autonomy from the State, to re-establish the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church,

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

to make all trials public, to free political prisoners, to guarantee freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and freedom of travel. In the economic sphere, her proposals (they may have been drafted by some of the other signatories) included the closing down of loss-making factories, the re-tooling of others to make them internationally competitive, the hiring of foreign managers, the abolition of unprofitable collective farms and the re-creation of private land ownership. Finally, she called for an end to the destruction of villages under the 'systematisation' plan, which had driven 'hundreds of thousands of peasants' from their ancestral lands and homes.

Ceaușescu's notorious 'systematisation' plan, accelerated to reduce the number of the country's villages by half by the year 2000, represented a spectacular own-goal by the Romanian leader, for it managed to draw international attention to the excesses of the regime and brought Doina Cornea her largest measure of domestic support. Twenty-seven teachers, writers and workers from the towns of Cluj, Sibiu, Făgăraș and Zărnești in Transylvania, including Iulius Filip and Dumitru Alexandru Pop, put their names to Doina Cornea's third open letter to Ceaușescu.⁴¹ This letter

⁴¹ The others were: George Vasilescu, a lawyer from Cluj; Haralambie Circa and Samoilă Popa, both teachers from Sibiu; Puiu Neamțu, an electrician from Făgăraș; Teohar Mihadas, a writer from Cluj; Isaia Vatca a painter from Cluj; Dan and Gina Sâmpăleanu, both teachers from Blaj; Crucita Mariana, a housewife from Turda; Peter Ivan Chelu, a theatre director; Melinda Chelu, an architect from Cluj; Zoltan and Judith Wrabel, Eniko Tabacu, Rachel Szocs, and Viorica Hecia, all teachers from Cluj; Marius Tabacu, a musician from Cluj; Marin Lupeu, Ioan Voicu, Mihai Torja, Marin Brîncoveanu, Bogdan and Monica Șerban, all workers from Zărnești; and Mihai Hurezeanu and Ion Rostas, both workers from Cluj. Iulius Filip, one of the founder members of the independent trade union *Libertatea* had been arrested in 1982 after writing a letter of support to the Polish trade union Solidarity. After five years in prison, during which time he was beaten, he was released but forced to choose from three places of work, none of which was close to his home and family in Cluj. He chose the town of Zlatna, some 150 km. from Cluj and commuted to work. He and his wife were placed under constant surveillance and they applied to emigrate. In June 1988, pressure was brought to bear on the couple to withdraw their application but they refused. In July Filip went to Birlad in Moldavia to meet fellow workers who were sympathetic to the aims of *Libertatea* but he was arrested on arrival and accused of a robbery committed in Cluj. He was badly beaten and detained for four days before being freed. On his return to Cluj he was re-arrested, this time for a robbery carried out in Birlad; he was beaten again, this time by Major Jurcut of the *Securitate*. *East European Reporter* (Spring-Summer 1989), p. 24.

marked an example rare in Romania of collective dissident protest from intellectuals and workers. Written in July 1988 but broadcast by RFE and published by the *Spectator* and *Le Monde* only at the beginning of September, it was devoted entirely to the plan and presented a ringing condemnation of it. Cornea's arguments were presented in the language of Romanian traditionalists who placed village life at the core of national identity: 'a village is a spiritual community which has been pieced together over the centuries... it is the cemetery... the church. By striking the peasant's house, you are striking at the nation's soul.'

If Ceașescu wanted to raise the peasants' standard of living, they could be helped by returning their land to them. The whole systematisation plan should be put to the people:

We consider that you do not have the right, without committing a grave abuse of power, to demolish villages without the agreement of the people affected and without even the agreement of the whole nation.⁴²

In a move that represented the height of irony for the Romanian leader, a group of Hungarians in Cluj announced their support for Cornea's appeal.⁴³ Systematisation succeeded in forging a unity between Romanians and Hungarians where all the regime's other measures had failed but it was a unity in opposition to Ceașescu.

Following the publication of this letter, Cornea was placed under house arrest, a restriction which was only lifted on 21 December 1989. Before house arrest was imposed, she managed to have smuggled out a letter to Pope John Paul II, signed by herself and six other members of the Greek Catholic Church, including her son and four of the signatories of the systematisation protest,⁴⁴ which appealed for his help in restoring the rights of their Church in Romania:

In spite of the official declarations from the Romanian authorities that there are no longer any Greek Catholics in this country, we wish to reaffirm our existence before the Holy See and

⁴² Cornea, pp. 84-5.

⁴³ V. Socor, 'Recent texts by Doina Cornea', RFE, *RAD Background Report/246* (Romania) (30 December 1988), p. 3.

⁴⁴ They were Viorica Hecia, Puiu Neamțu Dan and Gina Sâmpăleanu.

the whole world and request at the same time your support in maintaining it and restoring its rights to it.⁴⁵

Their appeal had been prompted by a proposal from the Romanian authorities that former Greek Catholics, who are exclusively Transylvanian Romanians, join the Roman Catholic Church, most of whose faithful are Hungarians, and that the services of the Roman Catholics should be in Romanian. Acceptance of the proposal would have two consequences: first, former Greek Catholics in rural areas would, the signatories claimed, be assimilated into the Orthodox Church simply because there was no other faith represented in the Romanian village (in fact, this had already happened following the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church in 1948, although there was no acknowledgement of it in the letter); and secondly, Roman Catholic Hungarians would see the position of their language eroded. Cornea's struggle against the regime now took on an overtly religious dimension, which meant that the Vatican could not remain indifferent to her fate.

Indeed, a campaign to secure her release from house arrest gathered momentum in the winter of 1988, fired by the transmission of the *Red Disaster* documentary on Belgian television. The European Parliament and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions passed resolutions in support of Cornea, and Laurent Fabius, President of the French National Assembly, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, former President of France, and Leo Tindemans, the Belgian Foreign Minister, intervened personally with the Romanian government.⁴⁶ In January 1989, the British ambassador to Romania, Hugh Arbuthnott, was manhandled by Romanian police as he attempted to approach Cornea's home in Cluj and was turned back. Several other European Community ambassadors took a lead from Arbuthnott, most notably the Dutch ambassador Coen Stork, in making overt enquiries about the fate of Cornea but the regime gave no ground. Nevertheless, international pressure continued to mount.

In March, the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva voted to investigate alleged violations by Romania. In April 1989, the BBC received the texts of two more open

⁴⁵ Iornea, p. 86.

⁴⁶ V. Socor, 'Recent texts', p. 1.

letters written by Cornea to Ceașescu. The first, dated 9 April 1989 and signed by six others, carried⁴⁷ her most blistering attack yet on the President:

This suffocating regime which you imposed against our very being, moral and biological, has become ever more difficult to bear. You have razed to the ground our oldest and most beloved churches. You have dug up the graves of our past rulers. You have started to destroy the country's villages, some of them hundreds of years old, in order to destroy their natural life. You have crushed the inner souls of people, humiliating them in their hopes and legitimate aspirations, humbling their consciences, forcing them, through pressure and terror, to accept lies as truth and truth as lies, and to thus acquiesce in their own moral crippling... Put an end to this repressive policy which is even more destructive than the economic disaster you have caused. Ana Blandiana, Dan Deșliu, Mircea Dinescu, are our poets, the poets of the entire nation, not your personal property... Stop the oppression of the righteous! Stop the infamous court cases with their trumped-up charges!... Set free the journalists and printers whose only guilt is that they cannot live a lie... Stop persecuting the former leading Communists who rightly reproach you for ruining the economic and social fabric of the country...⁴⁸

Less than a week later, the second letter was sent.⁴⁹ It catalogues the measures taken against Cornea and her family and showed that they had no basis in Romanian law. Nowhere will one find a more succinct indictment of the regime's disregard for the rule of law and of the arbitrary nature of the exercise of power. The purpose of these arbitrary and illegal practices was, as Cornea pointed out, to crush the people's will and it had

⁴⁷ They were George Vasilescu from Cluj, Bogdan and Monica Șerban, Ioan Voicu, and Mihai Torja, all from Zărnești, and Marin Brâncoveanu from Poiana in Gorj county.

⁴⁸ The full text was published in the *Spectator* on 29 April 1989, pp. 13-14. It contains slight differences from the Romanian text published in Cornea, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-2; in the English version, the name of Andrei Pleșu follows that of Mircea Dinescu).

⁴⁹ An English translation is to be found in D. Deletant, 'Crimes against the Spirit', *Index on Censorship*, no. 8 (1989), pp. 26-7.

made the country 'a gigantic prison in which the citizen is permanently attacked and humiliated'. But she ended on a defiant note with the certainty that 'fragile life will overcome'.⁵⁰

The international notoreity which Cornea's detention attracted was confirmed by the invitation extended to her by Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the French President, to attend a human rights conference in Paris between 22 and 24 June to mark the bi-centenary of the French Revolution. Once again, the Romanian authorities refused to grant Cornea an exit visa. Another invitation, extended this time by the Commission for Relations with non-member European countries of the Council of Europe, to address a meeting in Strasbourg in July failed to reach her because it was handed to the Romanian ambassador in Paris.

By this time Doina Cornea's treatment by the Romanian authorities had ceased to be unique; she shared her predicament with such writers and political figures as Mircea Dinescu and Silviu Brucan but she had taken her stance long before the changes in the Soviet Union offered a political umbrella, however previous, to those whose professional or family ties linked them to the home of Communism. Cornea remained for almost seven years a largely isolated figure and yet, because her views were formed from her own experience of daily life, one shared by her audience, her message gained in power. The gravest crimes committed by the Ceauşescu regime were, in her eyes, to strip people of their human dignity, to reduce them to an animal state where their major daily concern was the struggle to find food, to institutionalise misery and to atomise and homogenise the peoples of Romania. That few of her fellow citizens responded to this message should not be regarded as a failure on her part but confirmation at once of the enormity of the task she set herself and of Ceauşescu's success in brutalising his people. Her lonely challenge to the dictator and her refusal to abandon her own dignity and to fall silent in the face of persecution and intimidation bear testimony to the inner strength of a remarkable woman who for almost a decade represented the conscience of Romanians.

It is no exaggeration to say that no single case drew more attention to Romania's abuse of human rights and to the country's

⁵⁰ For the full text, see Cornea, pp. 97-100. Here the letter is dated 'March 1989' The text which reached the BBC carried the date '15 April 1989'

consequent, but belated, quarantining by the international community than that of Doina Cornea. Amidst an avalanche of criticism from both West and East, the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva adopted on 9 March 1989, by 21 votes for to 7 against, a resolution calling for an inquiry into alleged human rights abuses in Romania, the first such investigation to be authorised in any country for five years. A mark of the country's growing isolation was the abstention from voting of her Eastern bloc allies, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and East Germany, while Hungary went even further and joined the resolution's sponsors. The resolution highlighted the rural resettlement (systematisation) plan and the country's treatment of its ethnic minorities, drawing attention to the many thousands of Hungarian refugees who had fled Transylvania in the preceding months.⁵¹

The Romanian delegation made desperate attempts to influence the vote; its chief delegate, Gheorghe Dolgu, accused Hungary of conducting a revisionist campaign in a desire to divert its people's attention from internal economic problems. He sought support from Third World countries, which had a majority on the forty-three nation UN panel, but the sheer weight of evidence against Romania, some of it emanating even from within UN circles, undermined his case. Dumitru Mazilu, the Romanian specialist commissioned by the UN itself to prepare a report on human rights and youth in Romania in the previous year, was repeatedly denied permission to travel to the West, despite interventions on his behalf by the UN Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuellar. The Romanian authorities' claims that Mazilu was too ill to work and to travel could not be confirmed from Mazilu himself by the Secretary General.

On 3 March the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions lodged a formal complaint with the UN Commission that Romania was gravely abusing workers' rights. On 6 March, the US ambassador Vernon Walters criticised Romania for placing itself 'well outside the established European consensus on human rights' by refusing to accept certain provisions of the final document of the CSCE meeting in Vienna; on the eve of the UN vote, the West German-based League for the Defence of Human Rights

⁵¹ Dan Ionescu, 'Romania's Growing International Isolation', *RFE Research Romania*/3, (29 March 1989), p. 31.

in Romania issued a plea for three journalists on the government newspaper *România Liberă*, Petre Mihai Băcanu, Mihai Creangă and Anton Uncu, who had been arrested two months earlier for preparing a clandestine newspaper entitled *România*. The paper, printed on a makeshift press assembled by Alexandru Chivoiu, Nicolae Neacșu and Elena Gheorghe, reproduced an article on tyranny and demagoguery by the national poet Mihai Eminescu, a condemnation of Ceaușescu's rule by Uncu, a plea from Creangă to the public to read the paper, an editorial by Băcanu outlining the paper's programme and an article in the spirit of the editorial by a fourth journalist, Ștefan Niculescu Maier. Băcanu's editorial embraced wholeheartedly the spirit of *glasnost*, proclaiming that the newspaper would 'promote honest, open and even polemical reporting without claiming that it possessed a monopoly of truth, but we will try to find it... we want a change of direction in our lives, a reinvigoration, the removal of all constraints on the activity of an individual which wound his dignity, reform in place of bureaucratic and cynical rule'.⁵² The paper's appearance was timed to coincide with the extravagant celebration of Ceaușescu's birthday on 21 January but a contact of one of the journalists informed the *Securitate* and all of those involved in the production were arrested.

Confirmation of Romania's pariah status quickly followed. On 8 March, the EC Foreign Members lodged a protest with Romania about the harassment of Doina Cornea and on the same day, the Council of the Standing Conference of Communities and Regions of Europe adopted a resolution recommending that support be given to Romanian villages threatened with demolition under the rural resettlement programme. On 15 March, a group of thirty-five countries participating in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Congress held in Budapest decided to cancel an IPU conference due to be held in Bucharest in May. On the following day, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning the suppression of 'even basic human rights in Romania', 'the brutal suppression of minorities' and the 'deliberate neglect of handicapped and old people'. The European Community's External Affairs Commissioner Frans Andriessen announced that the EC

⁵² 'Cuvinte Arestate', *România liberă*, 7 January 1990, p. 3.

had suspended talks on a new trade agreement with Romania because of the country's poor record on respect for human rights.

These moves taken by the international community coincided with the growing disaffection with Ceașescu within senior political circles. On 10 March, an open letter to the President was made public by the BBC bearing the signatures of six veteran figures in the Party. Three of them were former members of the Politburo: Gheorghe Apostol, First Secretary of the Party from April 1954 to October 1955; Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, the Party's leading economist who played a key role in charting Romania's autonomy from the Soviet Union; and Constantin Pîrvulescu, who was a founding member of the RCP in 1921 and its secretary for a brief period from April 1944 until 1945. The other signatories were Silviu Brucan, Corneliu Mănescu, Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1961 to 1972 and President of the UN General Assembly from 1967 to 1968, and Grigore Ion Răceanu, a veteran member of the Party.⁵³

⁵³ For the full text of the letter, see Michael Shafir, 'Former Senior RCP Officials Protest Ceașescu's Policies', *RFE Research, Romania* /3 (29 March 1989), pp. 8-11. A good deal of misinformation and perhaps disinformation has circulated concerning the manner in which the letter reached the West. There seems little doubt that Silviu Brucan sent at least two copies of the letter on 1 March through the open post, one to the offices of Associated Press in Vienna, the second to a friend in London. The friend in London informed the BBC World Service, who sent a messenger to collect the letter. It was broadcast by the Romanian service of the BBC on 10 March and on the same evening, a despatch from London by Misha Glenny containing details of a telephone conversation with Brucan on the subject of the letter was transmitted in English (I am grateful to the Caris Information Service of the BBC World Service for providing me with a copy of the despatch). That same evening, I was interviewed by the BBC English-language service on the significance of the letter and shown a translation of it. In an alleged declaration made by Silviu Brucan to the *Securitate* on 23 March 1989, published in the Romanian weekly *Express Magazin* in its edition of 13-19 March 1991 (p. 9), Brucan said that he had sent a copy of the letter to me in London. I have no reason to disbelieve this. However, the only text of the letter which I saw was that shown to me in English translation on 10 March at the BBC. The name of the American correspondent William Pfaff has also been invoked in connection with the transmission of the letter to the West. Here is what Pfaff has to say about the matter:

I have been credited by Radio Free Europe (and elsewhere) with having brought the text of the dissident Communist leaders' letter of March 1989 to the West. This is not true. I seem to have provided a useful diversion in these events but the text of the letter was simply mailed by Mr Brucan to addresses in Vienna and London for transmission to the Associated Press and the BBC. When, after several days, the BBC had broadcast nothing, Mr Brucan concluded that the letter

As has been pointed out, this was not the first time that Pîrvulescu and Brucan had protested against Ceauşescu's policies. At the Twelfth Party Congress in 1979, Pîrvulescu, then aged eighty-four, accused the Secretary General of putting personal interests above those of his country and declared that he would not vote for Ceauşescu's re-election. In the wake of the Braşov riot of November 1987, Brucan broke the official silence in Romania to speak in support of the demonstration against the regime by referring to the legitimate grievances of the workers. But the 'Letter of the Six', as it became known, was completely without precedent in three respects: first, it was a protest against Ceauşescu's policies from within the senior ranks of the Communist Party itself; secondly, it was a collective protest; and finally, by sending their letter abroad, the signatories showed that there was no Party mechanism which they could use to discuss internal Party affairs. The letter was at once an admittance of Ceauşescu's complete emasculation of the RCP and of his dictatorship over the country. Yet unlike Doina Cornea's letters, the letter of the six was not written in the spirit of respect for a pluralist democracy; it advocated Party pluralism rather than democratic pluralism by casting its criticisms from a mould of allegiance to the one-party state. Using the model of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, the signatories declared that their reason for speaking out was because 'the very idea of socialism, for which we have fought, is discredited by your policy' and because 'our country is being isolated in Europe'. In doing so, they realised that they were 'risking our liberty and even our lives'. This was no shallow fear: Brucan had twice been warned by the head of the Party's Control Commission for ignoring Communist discipline by discussing Party affairs outside its organisation following his statement in support of the Braşov workers in November 1987.

The letter made five principal points. The first addressed the

had not got through (actually it had) and made another handwritten copy that he gave to the American Embassy, asking that it be immediately typed on an embassy machine and his version destroyed. His arrest promptly followed. According to him, the embassy had been penetrated by the Romanian security service, the *Securitate*, and an American officer had been turned.

Pfaff also revealed that Brucan had shown him a draft proposal for reform of the Romanian Communist Party during a visit to Bucharest 'in the late winter of 1988-89'. *International Herald Tribune*, 6 June 1991, p. 10.

condemnation which Ceașescu's policies had attracted from both within and without Romania: 'The international community is reproaching you for your failure to observe the Helsinki Final Act which you have signed yourself. Romanian citizens are reproaching you for your failure to respect the constitution on which you have sworn.' In support of their argument, 'the Six' cited:

- (a) the Systematisation, or rural resettlement, plan which involved 'the forced removal of peasants to three-storey apartment blocks';
- (b) the decree forbidding Romanian citizens to have contact with foreigners which 'has never been voted by the legislative body and never published';
- (c) the civic centre, otherwise known as the House of the People or House of the Republic, which 'had no public budget' and was being built 'against all existing laws regulating buildings and their financing';
- (d) the use of the *Securitate* against workers 'demanding their rights';
- (e) the requirement that employees work on Sundays, which contravened Article 19 of the constitution; and
- (f) the opening of mail and the cutting off of telephone conversations.

As an interim balance, the authors concluded: 'The constitution is virtually suspended and there is no legal system in force.' Without respect for the law from the very top, 'society cannot function'. The second and third points of the letter addressed the economy and the problems caused by planning and mismanagement in industry and agriculture: 'Planning no longer works...an increasing number of factories lack raw materials, energy or markets...and agricultural policy is in disarray'. The rural resettlement plan was irrational: 'Why urbanise villages when you cannot ensure decent conditions of human life in the cities, namely, heating, lighting, transport, not to mention food?' Facetiously, the letter argued that 'a government which for five winters in a row is unable to solve such vital problems for the population proves that it is incompetent and unsuitable for government. Therefore, we are not pressing on you any demand in this respect.'

The final points in the letter singled out the policies which had led to an erosion of Romania's international prestige. The

mass emigration of the country's ethnic minorities showed that 'the policy of forced assimilation should be renounced'. Some countries, such as Denmark and Portugal, had closed their embassies in Bucharest, most favoured nation status with the United States had been lost, and the EEC was unwilling to extend its trade agreement with Romania. The blame for this increasing isolation rested with Ceaușescu for his policies had attracted so much international criticism that Romania had effectively been placed in quarantine: 'How are you going to improve Romania's external relations when all the leaders of the non-Communist nations of Europe refuse to meet you?' A constructive note was struck at the end of the letter. The signatories expressed their willingness 'to participate in a dialogue with the government on the ways and means to overcome the present impasse'. The six were thus careful not to lay themselves open to the charge of subversion by openly calling for the President's removal and could similarly defend themselves against the accusation of treachery by claiming advocacy of an internal solution to the country's problems in keeping with Ceaușescu's oft-quoted principle of 'master of our destiny'.

Experience has shown that a necessary condition for political change in Eastern Europe was criticism by former Stalinists who became disillusioned with the Communist system. Milovan Djilas in Yugoslavia, Imre Nagy in Hungary, Alexander Dubček in Czechoslovakia and Rudolf Bahro in East Germany all advocated change from within the Party.⁵⁴ In Romania, by contrast, there had been no such figure of comparable stature. Apart from Pîrvulescu's outburst in 1979, there had been no public dissent from within Party circles until Brucan's protest in the wake of the Brașov riots in 1987 and even then, as in the letter of the six, there was no self-questioning of the validity of Marxism. There was no recognition of the failure of Socialist planning, which was merely said to be 'no longer working in the Romanian economy'. The six openly accepted the need for the *Securitate*, admitting that they created it 'in order to defend the Socialist order against the classes of exploitation' and implied that only Ceaușescu's abusive use of it against the workers had contributed to the crisis. Here lay the fundamental flaw in the credibility

⁵⁴ Shafir, 'Former Senior RCP Officials', p. 6.

of their appeal: failure to recognise their own prominent role in the abuses committed in the name of Stalinism in Romania in the late 1940s and 1950s and to admit the error of their ways gave them no moral authority upon which to base their protest. On the contrary, apologists for Ceașescu could merely dismiss it as the desperate action of a group of largely pro-Soviet activists who were ousted from their prominent positions in the mid-1960s as Ceașescu consolidated his position by appointing 'national' Communists. There was also the problem of a generation gap which had to be bridged if the dissent voiced by the six was to attract public support from the younger echelon of the Party. Not only was the average age of the signatories eighty (Pîrvulescu was ninety-four) but these men were identified with the Stalinist period of Romanian history, one which the younger *nomenklaturists* of the Party's Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy looked upon with distaste.

By the same token, the very fact that Brucan had been able to travel freely to the Soviet Union, the United States and the United Kingdom in the autumn of 1988 (after lodging his protest at the treatment of the Brașov workers in the previous year) showed that Ceașescu was wary of subjecting him to the same treatment that lesser mortals had endured at the hands of the *Securitate*. That caution stemmed from the fact that the Soviet Union had made it known to Ceașescu that it had a special interest in Brucan's safety by instructing the *Pravda* correspondent in Bucharest, Stanislav Petuhov, to maintain regular contact with Brucan and from the close interest shown by both the US and British embassies in Brucan's fate (Brucan had been the official guest of the United States, British and Soviet governments during his visits to these countries). The very fact that the six signatories were able to pass the letter to each other for drafting, despite undoubted *Securitate* surveillance, indicates that influential officials, either within the Party or within the *Securitate* or both, acquiesced in Brucan's action. However, the relative immunity he enjoyed did not exempt him from the wrath of Ceașescu. The order went out for Brucan to be moved from his house in the exclusive residential district of Bucharest to rooms in the suburb of Dămăroaia while Mănescu was deposited in a two-roomed dwelling with an earth floor in the Bucharest district of Chitila and his daughter Alexandra moved to Piatra Neamț. Pîrvulescu was taken to a village near Vaslui, and Bîrlădeanu was placed in a house in the

Vatra Luminoasa district of Bucharest. Apostol and Răceanu were detained until Ceaușescu's overthrow.

How seriously Ceaușescu took the letter became apparent only three days after its contents became known in the West. In a move designed to draw some of the sting out of the letter's criticism of the President, Bucharest Radio disclosed on 14 March 1989 that Mircea Răceanu, a deputy director in the Foreign Ministry and son of Grigore Ion Răceanu, one of the signatories, had been arrested on 31 January for 'consorting with foreign elements' and that he would be 'tried for espionage following investigations *which have yet to be completed*' (author's italics).⁵⁵ The timing of the announcement of Mircea Răceanu's indictment was clearly an attempt by the authorities to link the six signatories of the protest letter with treason and espionage and it seemed to foreshadow a show trial reminiscent of the Stalinist period. In an elaboration of the charge against Răceanu, an official press statement said that the *Securitate* had 'uncovered a grave action of betrayal... by Mircea Răceanu, formerly employed in the diplomatic service, who had placed himself at the service of a foreign power'.⁵⁶ An editorial in the Party newspaper *Scînteia* on 17 March underlined the association between reform and treachery by claiming that attempts to undermine national independence had been 'preceded by [the appearance of] perfidious, treacherous watchwords... adopted with distressing naivety by some people' or used in 'ill faith by treacherous people'.⁵⁷

The regime's obsession with security was confirmed by the dismissal, also on 17 March 1989, of the young Romanian poet Mircea Dinescu from the editorial staff of the Writers' Union weekly *România literară*. In August 1988, Dinescu went to the Soviet Union as a guest of the USSR Union of Writers and in an interview with Radio Moscow's Romanian service broadcast on 25 August, he gave the most emphatic expression of support for *glasnost* and *perestroika* yet given by a Romanian writer. He described the reform process in the Soviet Union as 'a great turning point', one with implications for the writer and his duty

⁵⁵ *Summary of World Broadcasts, BBC Monitoring*, EE/0547 (14 March 1989), p. 5.

⁵⁶ M. Shafir, 'The Regime Reacts to a Wave of Criticism', *RFE Research, Romania*/3 (29 March 1989), p. 15.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

to society; these duties contrasted with the role assigned to Dinescu and his colleagues by the RCP:

Under Socialism, writers should not be mere instruments, mere fellows who travel on this road... Each one must develop freely and express his own perceptions of life and the world. The polity can only gain by this [freedom]. The writer is his own conscience. Some time ago it used to be said that writers were the trustworthy helpers of the Party. One should better understand the precise sense of these words; one ought to understand how the writer can be a trustworthy helper. The writer is an extraordinarily keen observer of life and it is in this way that he can help the Party comprehend reality better... Generally, the mission of literature is not to provide solutions but to point out the problems.⁵⁸

The fact that this interview was rebroadcast suggested that Moscow welcomed Dinescu's views about reform and, taken together with his wife's half-Russian parentage, may well have given him a sense of insulation from Ceașescu's wrath. Upon his return to Bucharest in September, Dinescu invited a number of friends, among them Gabriel Liiceanu, Alexandru Paleologu and Andrei Pleșu, to his home to draft a collective protest against Ceașescu's destruction of Romanian culture and the country's villages. The group could not agree on a text and Dinescu decided to make his own protest. After the meeting, members of the group were visited by officers from the *Securitate*, who argued that Dinescu's action was prompted by the KGB and that it was directed against Romania and not just against Ceașescu. If they gave an undertaking not to attend another meeting, the officers would make sure that their activities did not reach the ears of Ceașescu. Dinescu was placed under close surveillance, as indeed were his friends. A clear sign of the authorities' displeasure was a refusal by the censorship officials in the Council of Culture to give the *imprimatur* for his volume of poetry, *Death reads the Newspaper*. Pressure was placed on him to apologise for what Mihai Dulea, the regime's literary 'commissar', considered to be the 'slandorous' nature of some of the poems but the poet declined. When this author

⁵⁸ M. Shafir, 'A Light from the East: A Romanian Writer Hails Perestroika on Radio Moscow', *RFE Research, Romanian SR/11* (16 September 1988), p. 28.

met Dinescu at a private party on 1 October 1988 (having been friends since 1984 when helping to select the poems for an English translation of his verse), he convinced me of his determination to resist this pressure and, if need be, to make a public stand against the regime. Support was offered by promising to do what was possible by drawing attention in the British press to any stand that he took.

In March 1989, Dinescu's private feelings about the abuses of the regime were made public in an interview published in the Paris daily *Libération* on 17 March. He was summoned at lunchtime on that day by the President of the Writers' Union, Dumitru Radu Popescu (also director of *România literară*), who, flanked by the novelist Constantin Ţoiu, informed him that he had been sacked for attending embassy receptions and meeting foreigners without permission. An hour later he was called to his local Communist Party headquarters and told that his membership had been revoked. Clearly the catalyst for these strictures had been the publication of the interview which Dinescu had given three months earlier at his home in December 1988 to a *Libération* correspondent in which he attacked the regime's spiritually degrading treatment of its people. Its publication on 17 March coincided with the letter of the six RCP dignitaries and the letter of Dan Deşliu (see below) and repeated several of the points made in these two protests:

Personal opinion has been abolished. Any attempt to utter unpleasant truths is classified as heresy and promptly punished. Today when you read the Constitution it seems like a fairy tale from *The Thousand and One Nights*. Not only do fundamental human rights have no residence permit in Romania but those related organs which should be defending them, not to mention the police and the security service, have become instruments of intimidation and terror of the population....

You ask why artists are silent? In our part of the world you won't find many fanatics or kamikazes. Even our poets were staid heads of families who were able, at the height of the king's power, to write anti-monarchical articles and poems. When times are somewhat kind to us, some of us are courageous and express reality. But we become cowardly and base again as soon as times get harsh. People have got used to watching,

waiting for statues to be knocked down, for what do you think Socialism is other than the knocking down of statues?⁵⁹

Dinescu reserved some of his most facetious comments for the President and his wife. In an obvious reference to the Ceașescu's efforts to mask their lack of education by courting academic awards abroad, he declared:

They collect PhDs and academic titles as some people collect English hats...and are probably more versed in the history of football than in the history of Marxism, which they advocate...They imagine that the *Communist Manifesto* is a leaflet that Marx used to paste on walls at night...They teach peasants how to grip a hoe, explain to workers which end of the nail to hit...and teach writers to write from left to right.

However, unlike the six Party veterans, Dinescu did not shy from mentioning the reform process applied elsewhere in Eastern Europe on the initiative of Gorbachev: 'I do not know whether Gorbachev is considered a "good Tsar" or not...but millions who had been forced into silence...in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR and Romania perceive him as the Messiah of Socialism with a human face.'⁶⁰

On 17 March, the day of publication, Dinescu was placed under partial house arrest. For four days, Romanians were allowed to visit his home on Strada Bitolia but not foreigners; then on 21 March, all visits were prohibited. Food parcels for Dinescu's family, some of it provided by the British, Dutch and Soviet embassies, were taken by friends, among them the historian Ludovic Demeny, to the house of Dinescu's parents-in-law who lived just a few doors down and who were allowed to visit. Demeny was prevented from delivering food in September when three *Securitate* officers from the surveillance team stopped him and warned him not to make further visits.⁶¹ From 17 March to 22 December 1989, Dinescu's house was kept under twenty-four-hour surveillance by three six-man teams each working eight-hour shifts.⁶² Dinescu and his wife Mașă were allowed to go

⁵⁹ *Libération*, 17 March 1989.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Interview with L. Demeny, 14 January 1990.

⁶² Interview with M. Dinescu, 8 January 1990.

out shopping, always flanked by two *Securitate* officers, but they were not allowed to receive visitors. In April, the British ambassador tried to pass a letter to Maşa outside her home as she was returning from shopping one day but the *Securitate* men stepped in quickly to prevent delivery. Like Doina Cornea, Dinescu received 'black spot' letters – threatening, unsigned letters with black edges in the form of obituary notices – during this period of partial house arrest, which lasted until the morning of 22 December. Claims that he received visits from Stanislav Petuhov of *Pravda* are dismissed by Dinescu as untrue.⁶³ His only visitor, apart from close members of his family, during the nine months' deprivation of freedom was an official from the Writers' Union who was allowed in to tell him that his request to go to the Black Sea for a family holiday had been rejected.

Dinescu attacked the President of the Writers' Union immediately after his dismissal for failing to protect writers in an open letter sent on 17 March: 'Perhaps you have somehow forgotten, Mr President, but you too are a writer and together we ought to eat the bread of that liberty which you have refused me by throwing me into unemployment.' According to the poet, the grounds for his dismissal were 'for receiving visits from diplomats and journalists from Socialist and capitalist countries without permission'.⁶⁴ The inclusion of 'Socialist countries' was a measure of the complete isolation in which Ceauşescu now placed the country in his determination to restrict Romanians' contacts with outsiders of all nationalities. This was first indicated by the issue of Presidential Decree Number 408 in December 1985, which made failure to report conversation with a foreigner a criminal offence. The legality of this decree, which had never been published, was challenged by the Brucan group. On 17 March 1989, *Scînteia* carried an editorial underlining the need to safeguard state secrets, especially since 'reactionary circles have not given up the attempts to promote hostile, anti-Socialist and anti-Romanian attitudes'. In an apparent attempt to justify the continuing need for the Presidential decree, the paper pointed out that 'some people's

⁶³ For example, see R. Portocala, *Autopsie du coup d'état roumain*, Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1990, p. 31.

⁶⁴ An extract from this letter appears in D. Deletant, 'An Island of Stalinism', *Independent*, 28 November 1989, p. 25.

undignified behaviour with representatives of other states sometimes arises from apparently harmless foibles and deficiencies, such as boasting and verbosity, which are used to advantage, sought and even entertained by traitors, spies, enemies of the country [and] adversaries of Socialism'.

Support for Dinescu came from seven writers: Geo Bogza, a short story writer and veteran socialist, the poet Stefan Augustin Doinaș, Dan Hăulica, editor of the cultural monthly *Secolul 20* (20th century), Octavian Paler, a critic and Andrei Pleșu, Alexandru Paleologu and Mihai Șora, all essayists. In a letter to the President of the Writers' Union, the seven expressed regard 'that contemporary Romanian literature should be called into question in the person of one of its foremost representatives' and asked that 'everything possible be done in order to make good an injustice and a mistake whose moral, professional and human consequences are extremely damaging'.⁶⁵ Although the signatories of this letter made a point of not disseminating it abroad in order to avoid provocation of the Romanian authorities, they were all prohibited from publishing except Bogza, a veteran Communist, who continued his column in *România literară*. Pleșu, a close friend of Dinescu, was dismissed from his post as an art historian on the grounds that it had been 'abolished' and was presented with the choice of either going to work as a museum curator at Tescani, a locality in the vicinity of Bacău some 300 km. north-west of Bucharest or remaining unemployed and thus running the risk of prosecution as a 'parasite'. Under Romanian law, there was no basis for this action. On 5 April, Pleșu left for Tescani without any explanation from the authorities as to why he was forced into 'internal exile', while the post he was given barely allowed him to support himself, not to mention his family in Bucharest. His wife was placed under surveillance and told not to receive any visitors, but at the end of May it was reported that these restrictions had been lifted. Pleșu was advised not to communicate with his friend Dinescu.

The poets Ana Blandiana and Dan Deșliu mentioned in the letter were also victims of the regime's repression. Following publication in the student review *Amfiteatru* (Amphitheatre) in December 1984 of four of her poems condemning the regime's brutalisation

⁶⁵ For the complete text, see Deletant, 'Crimes against the Spirit', p. 33.

of Romanians, Blandiana received death threats over the telephone and was forbidden to publish verse. In the spring of 1985, she was allowed a regular half-column of comment in the weekly *România literară* and an anthology of her poetry appeared in April 1989. However, the latter did not include any verse written after the interdiction. The publication of the anthology followed a letter to Ceaușescu on 3 March, in which Blandiana pointed out:

In these six months since I have been unable to publish in Romania, a book of mine has appeared in the German Democratic Republic, two others are at press in the Soviet Union, one is in the course of publication in England, and another in preparation in Italy, but I am a Romanian writer whose natural and inalienable right is to publish in her own country and language, and to contribute in this way, through her writings, to their flourishing.⁶⁶

As for Deșliu, he had been a poet of Socialist Realism during the 1950s, but in 1971 he protested at Ceaușescu's mini cultural revolution and became a defender of non-conformist writers in the Writers' Union. He was reported to have resigned from the Party in 1981 in protest at infringements of the Writers' Union statutes when Dumitru Radu Popescu was imposed as its President. He appeared for a while on television as a variety-show host until an unscripted critical allusion to the style of presidential rule led to his removal from the programme in 1984. On 3 March 1989, he wrote an open letter to Ceaușescu opining that Romania's problems 'lie in you and your aberrant view of reality: you think you are the owner of all Romania and all Romanians and for all your atheism, you are an out-and-out mystic'.⁶⁷ He told Voice of America in an interview that was interrupted on 14 March that he had been attacked in Bucharest and beaten. Two days later, the police searched his flat on the grounds that he was suspected of black market dealings in coffee beans. Three days later, he was arrested and apparently accused of stealing a plate from the Writers' Union.⁶⁸ After being allowed home under

⁶⁶ A. Blandiana, 'The Most Famous Tomcat in Town', *Index on Censorship*, no. 8 (1989), p. 34.

⁶⁷ For the text of the letter see Deletant, 'Crimes Against the Spirit', p. 28.

⁶⁸ This incident is described in Mircea Dinescu's letter; see note 64 above.

permanent guard, he went on hunger strike and at the beginning of May, was taken to hospital number 9 in Bucharest where he was force-fed. On learning of Deșliu's letter of protest, Doina Cornea declared her whole-hearted support for it:

I am entirely behind his courageous deed and I express my total admiration for him. I also extend my support to Aurel Dragoș Munteanu and Mircea Dinescu and I declare my solidarity with their actions.

I note that at last certain former leading figures in the Romanian Communist Party have courageously denounced the personality cult in Romania in the name of truth and equity, as well as the failure to respect human rights and the constitution. As a consequence, I declare my solidarity with their position, but I would like to insist upon the fact that I am not a Communist and that I cannot, under any form, adhere to their political ideology, in spite of the admiration which I have for their courage. Justice for Răceanu!⁶⁹

Once again, Doina Cornea showed her remarkable courage by speaking out against the regime's abuses. In emphasising this, it is worth pointing out that both she and six of the seven signatories of the 20 March letter from Bogza and others were all in their sixties (the exception being Pleșu, who was in his early forties). The only other writer of a younger generation to add his voice in support of Dinescu, Deșliu and Blandiana was Aurel Dragoș Munteanu. In an open letter to the president of the Writers' Union dated 8 April 1989, he said that he had been 'brutally dismissed' from the staff of the literary weekly *Luceafărul* for political reasons and that his telephone had been cut off. He appealed to the President to initiate a public debate on the case of the persecuted writers and to defend their rights of free speech.⁷⁰

Dinescu himself drew attention to the same abuse of the law mentioned by Cornea in a second open letter dated 22 June to the President of the Writers' Union. He revealed that his mail, telephone calls and friends were under constant surveillance and that his only contact with the outside world had been an

⁶⁹ Private communication.

⁷⁰ C. Ștefănescu, 'The Writer Aurel Dragoș Munteanu Protests against the Harassment of Writers', *RFE Research*, SR/5 (16 June 1989), p. 33.

anonymous death threat. Fear for his life doubtless prompted his cry that 'I still want to live' and his defiant statement that 'suicide is an inefficient form of protest'. Added to this catalogue of persecution was the halting of the publication of his wife's translation of Pasternak, thus denying the Dinescu family (the couple had two young children) their sole remaining source of income. Dinescu accused the regime of 'suffering a relapse by honouring its initial vocation for ideological and state terrorism' and charged the President of the Writers' Union and other members of its leadership with 'impudence' for writing about 'the abuses, atrocities, and crimes of the 1950s' while being 'directly responsible for the censorship, intimidation, isolation and elimination from cultural and social life of certain fellow members'.⁷¹

As if any were needed, further ammunition for the international community's attacks on the gross abuses of human rights perpetrated by the Ceauşescu regime was supplied by Dumitru Mazilu's long-overdue *Report on Human Rights and Youth* for the Commission on Human Rights of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Despite being held under close surveillance since February 1988, Mazilu managed to get a copy of his report to Geneva where it was presented to the Forty-first session of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities on 10 July 1989. Although presented as a catalogue of injustices directed against Romanian youth, it was in fact a damning indictment of the regime's treatment of all Romanian citizens. Its searing attack on Ceauşescu's policies was magnified by the colourful intemperance of its language which must have made riveting reading for the UN delegates. The report's opening paragraphs set the tone while at the same time avoiding any mention of Ceauşescu by name:

How can it be, the young Romanians ask us, that in our century, in which civilisation has attained unimagined heights, whole peoples should be terrorised in the world's plain sight, while criminal tyrants, instead of being removed and punished as they should be, are glorified by a cult of disgusting vulgarity?

⁷¹ Extracts from the letter were quoted in Crisula Ştefănescu, 'The Poet Mircea Dinescu Complains about Romania's Cultural Tragedy', *RFE Research, Romania*/6 (4 August 1989), pp. 29–30.

Mazilu asked what kind of civil society was it that would tolerate the transformation of the individual

...into a beast of burden useful only to put into practice the tyrants' plans of aggrandisement, so as to assure their immortality?...Not even in a nightmare world does it seem possible to hear that—as is happening in Romania—newborn babies are denied registration for the first three to four weeks [to hide the true infant mortality rate—*author's note*], while old people are refused aid in case of need if they have reached the aged of sixty and while medicine is out of the question altogether.⁷²

Mazilu's report elicited an almost hysterical response from the Romanian nominee to Geneva, Ion Diaconu. He described it as

...a political pamphlet, a collection of slogans...too fantastic and too crazy to comment on... It contains a list of defamatory affirmations and accusations directed at one country, at its internal policy, its political and social system...I doubt that everything in this paper has been written by its author. He was either ill or acting for personal political purposes.⁷³

How seriously some members of the UN sub-commission took Mazilu's plight and that of Romania's citizens is shown by their recommendation that the panel defer discussion of the report until the following year in the hope that he would then be able to attend!

While the pillorying of Ceașescu continued in the international arena, more writers summoned up the courage to rally to the symbols of resistance. The literary critic Alexandru Călinescu, a university professor at Iași, added his name to the list of those who wrote to Popescu at the Writers' Union in protest at Dinescu's persecution. As a consequence, he too was banned from publishing. On 28 September, yet another critic, Radu Enescu, the driving force behind the literary review *Familia*, published in the western Transylvanian town of Oradea, raised his voice in support of

⁷² *Report on Human Rights and Youth*, prepared by Dumitru Mazilu, Special Rapporteur, and submitted to the Commission on Human Rights, UN Economic and Social Council, on 10 July 1989, p. 3.

⁷³ Reuter, Geneva, 30 August 1989.

Dinescu. He described Popescu as 'an undertaker who zealously dispenses his energies worthy of a better cause in silently burying, without a church service, contemporary Romanian literature'. He admonished the President of the Writers' Union for the measures taken against Dinescu, Ana Blandiana, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș and Andrei Pleșu and suggested that if the national poet Eminescu were still alive, he too would be on the list of banned writers.

Călinescu and Enescu were not the only new names to show that they were not afraid of interdiction or of persecution. To the small but growing pile of protest letters on Popescu's desk (all of which went unanswered) was added in November a collective protest signed by eighteen young academics and writers, a sign that Dinescu's courage had finally spurred the younger generation of intellectuals into a public display of dissent. The eighteen condemned the banning of those writers and critics who had expressed their support for Dinescu and, in doing so, had salvaged something of the reputation of Romanian intelligentsia who, apart from the notable examples chronicled above, had remained embarrassingly silent over the fate of their fellows.⁷⁴ Indeed, this failure by writers to close ranks against the regime's oppression did not pass unobserved by Dinescu, despite his isolation. In a long statement signed on 11 November, he delivered a blistering attack on Romania's educated classes whom he held responsible for the country's predicament through their acquiescence in the regime and their sycophancy towards Ceaușescu. The Orthodox Church

⁷⁴ An example of how the will to protest was overcome by fear is shown by a note sent to the author by the poet, Marin Sorescu, dated 26 October 1989. Entitled 'Eminescu: grounds for concern for the Romanian authorities', it read:

They [the authorities] have not allowed a single Romanian writer to take part in the commemorative conference organised by the Italian Encyclopedia in Rome at the beginning of October to mark the hundredth anniversary of the poet's death. Zoe Dumitrescu-Bușulenga and Marin Sorescu were not given a Romanian exit visa. Had Eminescu's spirit needed such a visa it certainly would not have received one. The poet Marin Sorescu was also refused a visa to participate in a writers' conference in Canada (at the very time when Romania signed a trade agreement with Canada to which country Romania gave an assurance that it would respect human rights). Life has been reduced in this country to the level of humiliation and shortages of basic goods, and has become ever more difficult to support.

When confirmation was sought from the poet of his desire that the note should be published, he had second thoughts.

was full of 'trade unionists in religious vestments', its icons those of the President, journalists were 'apostles of the personality cult' and most writers 'trusted hand maidens of the Party'. Dinescu argued that the only salvation for the nation's dignity lay in organised defiance by those 'who have not knelt before the tyrant'. On the same day, Alexandru Paleologu wrote to Popescu to challenge the legality of the ban placed on his writing and to appeal to his conscience over the treatment meted out to Dinescu and his family. One week later, Mihai Șora wrote in a similar vein. In the view of Mircea Iorgulescu, an editor of the weekly *România literară* who requested asylum in France in August 1989, Dinescu's stand had indeed caused a crisis of conscience amongst Romanian intellectuals. Writers now had to choose between adopting an 'unreserved, frank attitude of protest' and carrying on their 'seemingly normal activity in order to leave the impression that Romanian literature and culture have not vanished'.⁷⁵

Șora's letter was sent only two days before the opening of the Fourteenth Party Congress which took place on 20 November. Several weeks earlier, the protest against Ceașescu had received significant momentum from the clandestine circulation of two letters, one in the form of an appeal to the Congress delegates not to re-elect Ceașescu, the other putting a number of questions to him about his mismanagement of the economy and human rights violations. Both letters were issued in the name of 'The National Salvation Front' (*Frontul Salvării Naționale*) and were sent to the West in the summer of 1989, being broadcast by Radio Free Europe respectively on 27 August and 8 November.⁷⁶

The composition of this 'Front' remained a mystery until a short while after the Revolution and this naturally invited claims that the National Salvation Front which assumed power after Ceașescu's overthrow was this same clandestine group. However, the two letters sent six months earlier under the name of the NSF were said by Silviu Brucan to have been written by Alexandru Melian, a professor at Bucharest University who had no connection with any of the leading members of the post-revolutionary NSF.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ C. Ștefănescu, 'Exiled Literary Critic Mircea Iorgulescu Speaks Out', *RFE Research*, SR/8 (10 November 1989), p. 24.

⁷⁶ M. Shafir, 'Ceașescu's Overthrow: Popular Uprising or Moscow-guided Conspiracy?', *RFE Research, Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 3 (19 January 1990), p. 15.

⁷⁷ Brucan, *Generația Irosită*, p. 218.

This is contradicted by Gen. Nicolae Militaru who claimed that he and Ion Iliescu (now President of Romania) were leading members of the clandestine NSF and that 'Iliescu agreed with the names NSF from the very beginning. He was the one who had the idea to write the appeal [to the November Congress], which was then written by a professor, Alexandru Melian.'⁷⁸

Another protest at the proposed re-election of Ceaușescu at the Congress was made by Dan Petrescu, a writer living in Iași who in a telephone interview with Radio Free Europe on 8 October denounced 'the network of corruption' within Romania and the 'formidable discrepancy between appearance and reality'. What was remarkable about the interview, apart from Petrescu's courage in speaking out, was the fact that, atypically, Petrescu was not cut off. Nevertheless, normality returned the following day when he was placed under house arrest.

Petrescu had begun a hunger strike on 8 October to protest against his dismissal as a librarian at the Iași University and the authorities' refusal to grant him a passport to travel to the West for medical treatment. This was not the first of his protests. After the Brașov riots of November 1987 he gave an interview to the French daily *Libération* (27 January 1988), calling for a moral regeneration in Romania based on an alliance between workers and intellectuals. He had been allowed to travel to France by the authorities in the hope that he would not return to Romania but 'he could not leave his country in the scoundrels' hands'. It was an illusion to believe that the situation in Romania could be changed by simply removing Ceaușescu; only by changing the system that produced Ceaușescu could reform come to the country and an indispensable condition of reform was the elimination of the pervasive corruption which was paralysing the country. In his Radio Free Europe interview, Petrescu confirmed reports of a petition that he, Doina Cornea and ten other dissidents had circulated earlier in October 1989 condemning the proposal to re-elect Ceaușescu as Party leader at the Fourteenth Congress. The other signatories were Gina and Dan Sâmpălean, Mariana Marin, Eugen Amarandei, Alexandru Tacu, Liviu Antonesei, Gabriela Iavolschi and Filip Raduț. In his telephone interview, Petrescu announced that his friend, Luca Pitu, who had been

⁷⁸ Author's interview with Gen. N. Militaru, 7 January 1995.

dismissed from his post as lecturer in French at Iași University for associating with Petrescu, had joined the protest. Others whom the authorities had threatened with dismissal were a university colleague, Alexandru Călinescu, Alexandru Tacu, a librarian and poet, the philosophers Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleșu, the poets Mariana Marin, Nicolae Ionel and Aurel Dumitrașcu, the literary critics Liviu Antonesei and Sorin Antohi and Gabriela Antonesei and Eugen Amarandei, Petrescu's neighbours.⁷⁹

The letters had no impact whatsoever on the Congress proceedings, for immediately after the opening national anthem applause broke out amongst the 3,308 delegates and to the accompaniment of rhythmic clapping chants of 'Ceașescu re-elected at the Fourteenth Congress!', 'Ceașescu, RCP!', 'Ceașescu and the people!', 'Ceașescu, Romania!' and 'Ceașescu, Peace!' went up. The very first resolution put to the congress by Manea Mănescu, a member of the Politburo, was to have Ceașescu proclaimed chairman of the congress and it was met with universal acclamation. This set the pattern of mechanical voting for proposals from the chair which was repeated throughout the congress proceedings.⁸⁰

It was as though the Party leadership and the delegates had buried their heads in the sand, oblivious to the warnings set out in the letter issued in the name of the National Salvation Front. Yet another Front signalled its existence in the Moldavian capital of Iași on 10 December when handwritten leaflets issued in the name of the Romanian Popular Front (*Frontul Popular Român*) were displayed in the history faculty of the University, calling on students to join a protest meeting at 2 p.m. on 14 December in Piața Unirii against 'the policies of the madman and his madwoman'. To prevent the meeting taking place, the militia and firemen were brought in to cordon off the square and even a tram stop was removed to prevent people from alighting in it. At the same time, a party meeting of university teachers was hastily arranged for 2 p.m. in the university to distract staff from joining the students. As an extra precautionary measure, a national judo meeting was arranged in Iași on the same day and many of the rooms in the Unirea Hotel overlooking the square were

⁷⁹ C. Ștefănescu, 'The Writer Dan Petrescu Criticises Regime in Telephone Interview with RFE', *RFE Research*, SR/8 (10 November 1989), pp. 17-20.

⁸⁰ D. Ionescu, 'The Fourteenth RCP Congress', *RFE Research*, SR/9 (14 December 1989), p. 21.

occupied by members of the *Dinamo* team, the club of the Ministry of the Interior. These measures succeeded, for the students were reduced to standing around in groups on the fringes of the cordon. The local state security office managed to identify some of the members of this Front, one of whom was a worker named Cassian; they were arrested but released on 22 December.

CENTRAL PLANNING AS COERCION: SYSTEMATISATION

There is no better example of Ceaușescu's autocratic rule than his programme of urban and rural systematisation.¹ *Sistematizare* has been defined as the organisation of existing counties, towns and settlements to conform with the present demands of society or the creation of new settlements and social, cultural and economic facilities to support them. Known also as the rural resettlement plan, its conception can only be understood in the context of Romania's status as a socialist state and in her economic position as a developing country; in this context, the programme justly merits the label of social engineering. The instruments of its implementation were a highly centralised system of authority and significant degree of coercion, both central features of totalitarian rule. It was in applying systematisation to his capital that Ceaușescu, like Mussolini and Hitler before him, sought to express his power and to symbolise the creation of a new society, and it was through architecture that he strove to leave his most enduring mark on Romania. As he often remarked to a close associate, he wanted to be remembered as the leader who 'modernised' Romania.²

The ideological premise for this modernisation was based upon the primacy of attaining goals set out in Marxist ideology. As in the case of other developing Socialist countries, Romania's leaders sought to generate wealth by using the country's internal resources, which meant harnessing the labour potential of the

¹ Ion Ciubotaru, 'Planificare și sistematizare', *Arhitectura*, no. 5 (1971) p. 33. *Sistematizare* should be distinguished from *planificare* which is used in a more general sense to refer to national planning. The process of systematisation is also referred to as urbanisation, modernisation and reconstruction. See Vasile Constantinescu, 'Urbanisation of Rural Areas or their Modernisation' in M. Constantinescu *et al.* (eds), *Urban Growth Processes in Romania*, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1974, pp. 278-91.

² Interview with Ilie Verdet, 5 May 1990.

population, most of whom were employed on the land until the late 1970s, and exporting the products of her agriculture and newly-created industries. A feature of such countries' development objectives was the scale and the rapidity with which they sought to achieve them. Often these objectives included a rapid rate of economic growth, the modernisation of population settlements by laying on mains drainage and power and the provision of improved educational and medical facilities.

In Romania's case, the insistence by Ceauşescu upon the central role of the Communist Party and upon the need to maintain a command mechanism in the economic sphere marked Romania out, alongside Albania, as the most orthodox Socialist state in Eastern Europe. The activity was most clearly reflected in development planning, which was entirely directed by the Party. As the Party became increasingly subject to the will of one man, so planning reduced participation within the Party in decision-making in general, and citizen participation in urban and rural planning in particular, to a cosmetic exercise.

Such a denial of consultation and dialogue struck at the heart of claims by the leadership to the existence of 'Socialist democracy' and the role of the people in the decision-making process. Not only were the public and the media excluded from this process but the professionals, such as architects and engineers, were as well. It was not so much the goals of Romanian economic development planning that aroused concern but rather the methods used to attain them, methods which said a great deal about Ceauşescu's attitude to his people and the constraints imposed upon Romanians in conducting their own lives and fulfilling their own destinies. Ceauşescu's absolute power enabled him to expedite the completion of his redevelopment schemes by ordering the compulsory purchase of land and property. In the case of the massive reconstruction of Bucharest city centre householders and tenants were usually given no more than six months' notice of demolition and were allocated alternative dwellings on the outskirts of the city. Compensation to the householders was fixed at a ceiling of 80,000 lei, the equivalent of two years' average salary.

The redevelopment of Bucharest, while usually regarded by commentators as part of the programme of systematisation, was a special case. The economic rationale of population resettlement or transfer from the village to the town did not apply to the

capital. Here Ceaușescu's design was to transform the city into an architectural symbol of his power and to give concrete expression to the cult of personality cultivated by the media. A natural disaster, the earthquake of March 1977, provided him with the opportunity to initiate his plan, although the areas scheduled for demolition were not those particularly affected by the tremor. For the origins of Romania's rural settlement planning policy, one must go back earlier, to the rift with Moscow in the early 1960s. They can be traced to her more autonomous political posture within Comecon and her consequent need for greater economic self-reliance. In this particular case, development planning provided a means to break free from dependency upon the Soviet Union.

This was in keeping with one of the measures laid down by Marx and Engels in their *Communist Manifesto* as being necessary to bring about the Communist revolution. The measures included the 'combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country, by a more equable distribution of the population over the country'.³

The industrialisation policy had important sociological, occupational and economic consequences, increasing the urbanisation of the population from 22 per cent in 1948 to 30 per cent in 1965 and to 49 per cent in 1983; the projection for the year 2000 was 75 per cent. The movement to the towns siphoned off people from rural areas and diminished village populations thus raising questions in the literature of Romanian specialists during the early 1970s about the need for rural development.⁴ Many villages were considered too small and isolated to merit investment in services and the patchy nature of their settlement left plots of land uncultivated. The areas with greatest dispersal of small settlements were in highland regions and those counties with large numbers of such localities incurred greater expense in providing services, transport and communications. The solution to this imbalance in regional settlement patterns could only lie, according to the dictates of Socialist planning, in a national settlement plan.

³ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1958, p. 54.

⁴ D. Turnock, 'Restructuring of Rural Settlement in Romania', *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1976), p. 84.

The implications for the village in the application of a settlement plan were clear from the Soviet experience from which Ceauşescu drew much inspiration. Soviet rural settlement theory maintained that the transition from a capitalist to a Socialist mode of production would result in the final disappearance of the village as a distinctive unit of settlement. In accordance with this tenet of Marxism, Nikita Khrushchev put forward ambitious proposals in 1951 to re-house the rural population in newly built 'agro-towns' with modern dwellings and facilities.⁵ Although the plans were not approved by the politburo and may have been responsible for Khrushchev's temporary removal as party Secretary for Agriculture in that same year, his idea 'became the basis of all thinking on rural settlement planning for a decade and is still at the heart of much being done in this area today'.⁶ This was certainly the case in Romania.

The rural problems which Khrushchev sought to address were similar to those confronting Ceauşescu: mass immigration largely of young people from the countryside to the towns, where there was a higher standard of living, and the reluctance of professional people, especially doctors, to settle in rural communities. By raising country life to the level of town life, by providing the same facilities to rural inhabitants as to urban dwellers, Khrushchev hoped to stop the exodus from the villages. Ceauşescu shared this aim. Both men were no doubt also driven by a genuine desire to raise the standard of living of the peasantry. On the economical level, Khrushchev's aim was to retain a labour force to improve the performance of agriculture; in those areas of agricultural production in Romania where a concentrated labour force was required, Ceauşescu had the same purpose.

In 1959, Khrushchev was able as Party Secretary to reintroduce his rural settlement plan; in its rationale and method of application it can be seen as the model for Romania's 'systematisation' programme.⁷ The Soviet resettlement plans provided an almost exact blueprint for the later Romanian ones. All villages in the district were divided into the categories of 'with prospects' or

⁵ J. Pallot, 'Rural Settlement Planning in the USSR', *Soviet Studies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (April 1979), p. 215.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

'viable' and 'without prospects' or 'non-viable'. The 'viable' villages were usually larger ones with an administrative status and these were targeted for growth; the 'non-viable' ones were either to be left to atrophy or to be demolished and their inhabitants forcibly resettled. The village sites thus released would be reclaimed for cultivation, thereby providing an additional economic benefit. No major construction was to be carried out in the 'non-viable' villages, while in the viable ones the policy of concentrating the increased populations favoured the construction of four- or five-storey blocks of flats instead of the single-family, detached cottages. Private garden plots were allotted on the outskirts of the village and in its centre were to be constructed modern amenities and services.⁸ It was largely in the location of the private garden plots, placed between the communal blocks of flats, that the Romanian resettlement plans differed from their Soviet models.

Soviet experience also revealed the snags. Studies published in the later 1960s in the Soviet Union revealed that in estimating the expenditure involved in the forced concentration policy, the cost of demolishing the 'non-viable' villages, capital costs for construction in the 'viable' ones and the less obvious consequences of the loss of the private plot to the peasant which would turn him from a producer into a consumer had all been overlooked. Indeed, Soviet researchers found that the loss of the private plot was, in some areas, the major factor in causing people to continue to migrate to an established major town, thus vitiating one of the principal objectives of the resettlement plan. In addition to these negative consequences of the plan, it emerged that one of its supposed benefits, the release of land for cultivation, was less important than envisaged since many of the sites of demolished villages could not readily be used.

Paradoxically, in light of the political goal which the Romanian regime sought to attain, namely that of reducing its dependency upon the Soviet Union, its programme remained much more faithful to the Soviet model. It thus offered its leaders an argument that they were merely following the Soviet example and not straying in this respect from the Soviet fold. If further justification for the Romanian Party's desire to break the client-patron relation-

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

ship with the Soviet Union were needed, it was offered by the troubled past of Romania itself.

Romania at the end of the Second World War was a country with great regional variations in development and urbanisation, especially between Transylvania and the remaining provinces. Such industrial development as existed was confined to an east–west axis of southern Transylvania from Timișoara to Brașov and a north–south axis from Sighișoara to Ploiești and Bucharest.⁹ Thus the country remained predominantly agricultural, with great discrepancies between town and country.

The lack of development showed up in the settlement pattern. In 1945, 80 per cent of the population of 16 million lived in villages, most of which were poorly served by transport and communication facilities. In the more backward regions of Moldavia the villages were smaller and less accessible, and consequently education and health services were virtually non-existent. In these conditions, the incidence of infant mortality over the whole country reached some of the highest levels in Eastern Europe.

Marxism-Leninism provides both a theory and a programme of industrialisation. So 'building Socialism', as applied by Stalin in the Soviet Union, dictated the policies of the Communists whom he imposed upon Romania in 1948. Initially, economic development through industrialisation was focused upon those towns with an established industrial base, such as Brașov, Timișoara and Reșița in Transylvania, and Ploiești and Bucharest in Wallachia. Their expansion merely perpetuated the inequalities between them and the surrounding rural areas from which they drew their labour. It was only in the late 1950s, as a consequence of the Romanian Party's decision to embark upon a policy of rapid, intensive industrialisation, that an effort was made to bring the advantages of urban life to the villages. In Romania's case, intensive industrialisation meant rural industrialisation, with economic expansion directed towards the creation of new enterprises, drawing upon local resources in rural areas. The new industries required a labour force and modern housing; hence a policy of rural development became a priority. The programme of 'systematisation' was formulated in order to channel this rural development.

⁹ S. Sampson, *National Integration through Socialist Planning: An Anthropological Study of a Romanian New Town*, Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1984, p. 69.

On an initiative of Ceaușescu, the Central Commission for Village Systematisation was established in November 1965.¹⁰ Village land and water was to be used more efficiently, ribbon development avoided and building carefully controlled so that agricultural land would not be lost. Improved standards of living and better public services for workers moving to the developed villages were a primary aim of the Party's economic policies which contained two interrelated features: regional development and territorial 'systematisation'. The first was based on an equitable regional distribution of economic development and the second on the restructuring of rural settlement through industrialisation of designated villages and the transfer of labour. The details of the regional development plan were embodied in the Central Committee recommendations of October 1967 regarding the administrative reorganisation of the whole country.¹¹

Territorial reorganisation and administrative reform were designed prerequisites for an effective national economic policy in which the role and powers of the towns and communes would be enhanced, bureaucracy reduced as the structure was simplified and the carrying out of higher-level decisions accelerated. The elements were spelt out by Ceaușescu in his *Report concerning the Measures for Perfecting the Management and Planning of the National Economy and for Improving the Administrative – Territorial Organisation of Romania*, delivered at the national Party conference on 6 December 1967. Ceaușescu provided the economic rationale for the rural resettlement programme that only within the framework of strong rural units would it be possible to develop a corresponding material basis to extend the economic activities for turning out and processing farm produce, the handicrafts and the output of artisan articles, all of which would help to diversify material produc-

¹⁰ D. Turnock, *An Economic Geography of Romania*, London: G. Bell, 1974, p. 94.

¹¹ The former three-tier system of regions, districts and towns and communes was to be replaced by a two-tier one comprising counties on the one hand and municipalities, towns and communes on the other. Romania's sixteen regions were regrouped into thirty-nine counties, its forty-seven major towns were elevated to the status of municipalities, 189 centres were declared towns and the number of communes was reduced from 4,257 to 2,706, of which 145 were suburban communes. The commune, which was made up of two to seven villages, became the basic rural administrative unit and its largest villages was designated the commune centre. Of the 189 newly declared towns, 49 were small market centres enhanced to give a more balanced distribution of towns county by county.

tion and raise the degree of employment of the labour force in villages. Reorganisation would ensure the existence in every commune of a vast network of social – cultural establishments – a school for general education, houses of culture, a public library, a cinema, a dispensary, a maternity hospital, a public bath, a bakery and shops to secure higher living standards for the rural population.¹²

Greater numbers of intellectuals would be brought into the village, thus enhancing cultural activity there. Later Ceauşescu was to see the intellectuals' role as a social as well as a cultural one, saying that through this, the elements of modern civilisation would more rapidly penetrate into the life of the villages and the process of gradually bringing village life closer to town life would be accelerated.¹³

The proposals received the approval of the national Party conference and were passed into law by the Grand National Assembly in February 1968. But it was not put into effect immediately. Four years later, Ceauşescu was re-emphasising the importance of the village systematisation for the realisation of the national economic plan. Unforeseen difficulties in completing the territorial reorganisation and administrative reform may explain the delay. During this interval, the ideological rather than economic significance of the disparity between town and country received greater attention from the Party Secretary.

Systematisation received its major impetus at the Party conference of July 1972 when Ceauşescu called for a drive for economic development which would make Romania an urbanised, industrial country by 1990. Ceauşescu reiterated the importance of the territorial reorganisation reforms in carrying out the programme: new industries and the modernisation of agriculture would be accompanied by a national plan for regional town and village planning. By placing industrial plants in the countryside and supplying modern utilities and services, chief villages in communes (commune centres) would become, using a term coined by Khrushchev in his original resettlement proposals of 1951, 'agro-towns'.¹⁴

¹² N. Ceauşescu, 1969, vol. 2, pp. 544–5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 546.

¹⁴ N. Ceauşescu, *Report to the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party (19 July 1972)*, Bucharest: Agerpres, 1972, p. 45.

The solution to 'raising the level of organisation and civilisation of villages' was 'a concentration of localities and buildings'.¹⁵

In achieving this, land conservation was vital. Fixed perimeters were established around each locality and no construction would be permitted beyond them. Three hundred or more localities would be developed into towns whose growing populations would be accommodated in multi-storey communal blocks of flats. In this way, the population density would be increased; no new one-family single-storey houses would be allowed. Each new town would have a population of at least 5,000 inhabitants and be endowed with a civic centre containing the offices of local government and authority. New shops, factories, schools and clinics would enable the new centres to serve four to five communes within a radius of 15-20 km.¹⁶

The enhancement of villages into towns would be accompanied by 'a reduction in the number of villages within a commune as well as the regrouping of the population in small and scattered villages, lacking in the preconditions for development, into those localities which have these possibilities'. Local involvement in these plans was limited to the passive role of being kept informed; nothing was said about consultation, let alone action embodying the fruits of discussion.

Nevertheless, anxiety over the problems in implementing the policy surfaced even at the conference. Regional party officials, while recognising the need for systematisation, expressed doubts about certain aspects of its application. Two were considered particularly sensitive: expropriation of private houses and land, either for agricultural use or development, and vertical construction in two- to four-storey housing units in order to conserve land. The latter was seen as the most conspicuous means of bringing the town to the country. A collective farm president was remarkably farsighted when he gave a warning that 'we should not transform the peasant from a producer to a consumer; the peasant must continue to produce for himself in his garden all the vegetables he needs, while the surplus is sold on the market'.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Conferința Națională a Partidului Comunist Român (6-10 iulie 1972)*, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972, p. 479.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 485.

¹⁷ Sampson, p. 79.

These concerns probably explain why it was only two years later that Law no. 58, 'Concerning the territorial planning and systematisation of urban and rural localities', was passed by the Grand National Assembly in October 1974. In the towns, new buildings were to be at least two storeys high, with residential areas located close to factories so as to reduce commuting times. In the countryside, the law stipulated that in order to make optimum use of land for agriculture, each commune must establish building perimeters for its constituent villages. New housing was to be in two- to five-storey blocks of flats and no dwelling was to exceed 250 square metres. Private allotments were to be allocated in the spaces between the blocks. Expropriation and demolition could be carried out 'in the public interest' but only after 'just compensation'.¹⁸ In the chief village of the commune a civic centre, housing the political and administrative offices, cultural and medical facilities and retail outlets, would be built and water drainage, gas pipes and telephone services provided.

To put the law into effect, a centralised planning system directed by the Council of Ministers and a Party and State Central Commission for Regional, Town and Village Planning was established. Under their supervision, the Committee for the Problems of People's Councils approved the systematisation plans submitted for each locality. These plans were drawn up in the planning institutes of the People's Councils in the counties and in the municipality of Bucharest and covered three dimensions: a background profile of each settlement (*studiu de sistematizare*), a development plan for the settlement offering various configurations (*schia de sistematizare*) and a detailed survey showing the projected location of every street and building (*studiu de amplasament*).¹⁹ Under the law, the President of the Republic (Ceaușescu's newly created position since March 1974) had to approve all plans related to county capitals and municipalities. As far as the commune centres designated for development into towns were concerned, details of their conversion were approved by the Council of Ministers, but in the case of the other villages approval was left to the county People's Councils. The responsibility of the two bottom

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

tiers of the planning system, the town and commune People's Councils, was limited to carrying out the plans.²⁰

The restricted role of the town and commune People's Councils in the systematisation process demonstrates the limits on citizen participation and its representative character. The official argument that representatives of the people participated at every stage of the planning process is akin to the adage that the people enjoy the privilege of foreign travel through their Party 'representatives'.²¹ It was the form of participation that raised doubts about its efficacy. While citizens were encouraged to join systematisation committees in every locality, their participation in the village was in practice restricted to the execution of the plans. Participation took the macabre form of demolishing their own homes; failure to do so would have rendered them liable to pay for demolition by the state's bulldozers. Such diabolical tactics by the authorities gave the regime a propaganda ploy in allowing them to claim that villagers were enthusiastically in favour of systematisation but foreign observers, including this author, who witnessed and reported the tragic scenes accompanying the demolition of peasant cottages in the autumn of 1988, could not be deluded by such nonsense.²²

The requirement that citizens were to be consulted and informed by the planners of proposed developments carried no obligation on the part of the planners to accept suggested changes. No effort was spared in the Romanian press to explain the advantages of systematisation in an attempt to overcome peasant resistance and the regime's fear of this certainly strengthened its resolve to exclude

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Great importance was attached by Party ideologues to public participation in decision-making: 'The participation of the whole people in decision-making on each country's development objectives is, as a matter of fact, one of the essential criteria in appraising the democratic character of a political regime... The system of revolutionary worker democracy in Romania, created and continuously improved in the period after the Ninth Congress, combines, in a unitary whole, the people's participation in the management of the state.' (G. Crețoiu, 'Elimination of Socioeconomic Inequality – Expression of Socialism's Superiority', *Lumea*, 5 May 1989, p.23.)

²² A Special Correspondent (D. Deletant), 'Land Where Hope Has Died', *The Times*, 8 October 1988, and my letter to *The Times* of 4 May 1989. Others who signalled the enormities of systematisation in letters to *The Times* on several occasions from 1987 onwards were Jessica Douglas-Home and Mark Almond.

the peasants from the decision-making process. The evidence of peasant attitudes to the town, extremely sparse as it was, supported such fears. A survey conducted among 245 villagers in the southern county of Argeş in 1974 revealed a preference for village life based precisely upon those qualities and advantages which they felt urban life would deny them; 228 of those questioned did not want to move to a town, most of them because they had their own garden and house, their own fowl and livestock and their own plots of land. Less than a quarter declared themselves dissatisfied with insufficient means of transport to town and only 10 per cent were unhappy with the poor provision of village shops.²³ Although this sample could hardly be called representative, since most of those questioned were over thirty years of age and 88 per cent were males, its evidence was born out by the coercion needed in 1989 to implement systematisation. This included the withdrawal of transport facilities and local shops from villages designated unviable, thereby showing that the plan could not be effected on a voluntary basis.

The need for coercion highlighted the nature of power in Romania. The relationship between government and the governed was defined in the case of development planning and systematisation in the conflict between the general interest and the individual interest. The general interest was dictated by Ceauşescu and equated by him with the national interest. To the national interest were subordinated all local and individual interests. Hence in development planning, all regional and local interests were overridden by a national plan. The implementation of a national plan, by its very nature, requires a high degree of centralisation and this, coupled with the denial of any other interest, fostered the authoritarian nature of Ceauşescu's rule in general and of the systematisation scheme in particular.

Defining the national interest also provided Ceauşescu with an invaluable political lever which he could pull to counter any expression of regional, group or individual dissatisfaction. Such criticism was dismissed as 'chauvinist', 'sectionalist' or 'bourgeois'. Ceauşescu's ideological obsession with the creation of a monolithic, uniform, concentrated political state permeated his thinking about the character of Romanian society and its environment. Uniformity

²³ Constantinescu, pp. 278-91.

was best achieved in an urban setting, in high-density structures which also provided the advantages of modern facilities and services. Uniformity of architecture went hand in hand with depersonalisation of the individual. There were no mechanisms to allow the individual, the peasant, to offer alternatives, for such procedures would have constituted a threat to the national plan imposed by the leadership. The absence of these mechanisms meant that there was no meaningful dialogue between the state and the citizen and no formal basis for the exercise of local power. There was, however, an informal basis; the extended family or a communality of interest. Power exerted in this way on a small scale could be quite effective in deflecting the provisions of the national measures to suit local interests and the further the community is from the centre, i.e. Bucharest, the greater the chances of success. Hence systematisation plans were circumvented and retarded in many areas of Moldavia and Transylvania. During a visit to Maramureș in October 1988, this author discovered that in several villages new houses had been constructed by peasants beyond the building perimeter fixed under local planning regulations.²⁴ These regulations had been drawn up to preserve land for agriculture under a directive issued by Ceaușescu but had been consciously disregarded by mayors who sanctioned the construction. Only if the local Communist Party's attention was drawn to the contravention was the mayor fined 5,000 *lei*. However, this amount was covered by the householder and no further action was taken.

From the publications of development planners in the mid-1970s, it was clear that the reduction in the number of villages would be achieved by phasing out (*dezafectare*). Prime candidates for this fate were those with a population of less than 1,000. Those villages not earmarked for phasing out would be modernised through the provision of piped drinking water, sewage and heating facilities. The scale of the task and the progress made in this area was indicated by the fact that in 1975 only 261 of Romania's 13,123 villages had piped drinking water and only 411 localities, including towns, were connected to natural gas. By 1979, these figures had risen to 1,130 for water and 442 for gas and by

²⁴ See also D. Turnock, 'Romanian Villages: Rural Planning under Communism', *Rural History*, no. 2 (1991) p. 98.

1984 to 1,992 and 481 respectively.²⁵ By the year 2000, 85 per cent of communes were to have piped drinking water and 82 per cent modern sewage systems.²⁶

The villages most likely to be phased out were those whose prospects for growth were considered minimal owing to their isolation and their small population. Many were pastoral settlements which were gradually losing population and Gypsy hamlets on the fringes of Romanian villages. Estimates of the number of villages to be phased out ranged from 3,000 to 6,300 in publications from 1976 and 1977 (i.e. between 25 and 50 per cent of the existing number of villages) and they were concentrated in regions with extensive highland and forest areas where water supplies in particular posed problems.²⁷

The methods of phasing out a village were not disclosed. In some cases, such as Vlădiceasca in Ilfov in September 1988, villagers had been informed some months previously that their homes were to be destroyed but they were given only two days to demolish their houses or have them bulldozed. Many preferred to let the authorities do their own dirty work and the village was completely razed. Since the site of their houses was given over to agriculture, they received no compensation. The population was relocated to neighbouring Ghermănești, where state-owned four-storey blocks of flats had been constructed on the sites of demolished private houses whose owners did receive some compensation. In view of the international outcry provoked by the destruction, the Romanian authorities changed their tactics to oblige people to leave targeted villages by making life there virtually impossible. Food shops were closed down and bus services withdrawn so that commuters to the new agro-centres would be forced to move away and the villages left to atrophy.

Of the thousands of exhortations made by Ceaușescu to the Romanian people, none was seized upon with more alacrity by the international media than his call that 'we must radically reduce the number of villages from about 13,000 at present to 5,000 to 6,000 at most'. This was made in an address to the National

²⁵ *Anuarul Statistic al Republicii Socialiste România 1976*, Bucharest: Direcția Centrală de Statistică, pp. 476, 479; *Anuarul Statistic 1980*, pp. 608, 613; *Anuarul Statistic 1985*, pp. 332-4.

²⁶ Sampson, p. 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Conference of the Presidents of People's Councils on 3 March 1988.²⁸ His intention was taken at face value by the Western media as a plan physically to demolish 7–8,000 villages. Coming at a time when conservation and concern for the environment had been promoted to the top of Western political agenda, Ceașescu's plan sent shock waves around the capitals of Europe and North America. Public awareness in the West of Ceașescu's disregard for Romania's architectural heritage had been aroused by reports which trickled out in the early 1980s of his razing of the centre of Bucharest to make way for a new administrative complex of gargantuan proportions. The centrepiece of this project was a presidential palace, whose original name, 'The House of the People', assumed Orwellian overtones since some 40,000 hapless citizens were forcibly evicted from their homes to make way for its construction. As the project proceeded, the palace was rechristened 'The House of the Republic' as around it were to be concentrated new ministry and other public buildings.²⁹

The impetus for this redevelopment came from the earthquake of March 1977. Ceașescu was shaken by the collapse of several buildings in the centre of Bucharest and urged his planners to look for an area of the city that would be more resistant to tremors where a new administrative centre could be built. 'The idea of constructing a centre for the capital of course belongs to Comrade Ceașescu', stated Petre Vraciu, an architect at the planning department in Bucharest.³⁰ Ceașescu's conception of the centre was as the core of a vast redevelopment of the capital which was to be symbolic of his political achievements as a whole. 'I am looking for a symbolic representation of the two decades of enlightenment we have just lived through; I need something grand, something very grand, which reflects what we have already achieved', he was reported to have said.³¹ Just as centralisation was the hallmark of Ceașescu's rule, so the instruments of his power were to be concentrated in one area: alongside the House

²⁸ *Scinteia*, 4 March 1988.

²⁹ D. Aspinall (pseudonym of D. Deletant), 'Romania: Queues and personality cults', *Soviet Analyst*, vol. 13, no. 10 (16 May 1984), pp. 4–5.

³⁰ Quoted from M. Cavalcanti, 'Totalitarian States and their Influence on City-Form: The Case of Bucharest', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, vol. 9, no. 4 (Winter 1992), p. 278.

³¹ *Ibid.*

of the People was to be erected a House of Science and Technology, the brainwave of the pseudo-qualified 'scientist of world renown', Ceaușescu's wife Elena, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, the State Archives and a National Library.

Because of their proximity to the city centre and their location on higher ground, the Uranus, Antim and Rahova quarters of the city were the districts chosen for the site of the administrative centre yet they were also the oldest areas of the city, with a concentration of historical monuments, principally monastic buildings and churches, some of them more than 300 years old. The residential parts of these districts contained some of the capital's most elegant houses ranging from single- and two-storey family houses with large courtyards to three- or four-storey buildings designed by celebrated architects such as Ion Mincu and Horia Creanga. For the design of the House of the People, Ceaușescu held a competition which was won by Anca Petrescu, a twenty-five-year-old straight out of architecture school. It was she who conceived the second largest public building in the world after the Pentagon, 86 metres high with façades 276 metres long covering an area of 6.3 hectares. Its principal façade would look out over a wide, straight, triumphal boulevard, flanked by massive apartment blocks for the favoured of the regime, a boulevard longer than the Champs-Élysées. Adjacent to this, christened the Victory of Socialism, and to the House of the Republic were the sites of the various ministries and public buildings. Petrescu's design required the destruction of the entire district of Uranus and much of the Rahova and Antim quarters.

No attempt was made by Petrescu to achieve a balance between these buildings of historical interest in the area and the new development. Ceaușescu simply took the plan, added a few embellishments of his own and presented it to the various Party and state bodies under the title of *indicații* (suggestions), the usual euphemism for the President's dictates. The funding for the plan, known officially as *Ansamblul Bulevardul Victoria Socialismului* (Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism Complex), was granted by a presidential decree issued on 29 December 1981 and, as the programme for development expanded to include new areas adjacent to the Uranus district, a second decree was enacted on 5 September 1984 for further monies to be provided. As Petrescu herself confided after Ceaușescu's overthrow, the President was obsessed with the project

and his appetite for reconstruction grew with its progression. Nicolae and Elena visited the site every Saturday morning, 'very formal, very businesslike, never praising anyone. He had more regard for the workers than for the architects, shaking hands with craftsmen, talking informally to the foremen.'³² But he had difficulty in making up his mind about matters of detail; Petrescu had to first build to full-scale papier-mâché models of columns of windows for Ceașescu to appreciate the effect of changes he was recommending; even then, he constantly changed his mind. Since the President was unable to master problems of perspective and scale, the project grew and the area around it expanded. As a consequence, the House of the People 'began to look smaller, so now he wanted it bigger'.³³

This entailed even further demolition. Thousands of family dwellings and a number of churches were completely razed to the ground before the international outcry forced Ceașescu to agree to the relocation of one or two churches by moving them on huge wooden rollers. Initial reaction in Romania to the Bucharest and other urban redevelopment plans was confined to expressions of concern in professional circles about their impact in several cities upon buildings of historical interest. A special meeting was held from 25 to 27 May 1979 at the Transylvanian Museum of History in Cluj on 'Urban Renovation and Contemporary Problems' at which twenty-four architects and historians from Bucharest, Cluj, Pitești, Sibiu and Timișoara stressed the need for an inventory of historical buildings to be drawn up so that they could be protected. In December of the same year, a similar event was held in Bucharest whose proceedings were published.³⁴ A series of like events, designed to generate discussion about the plans for Bucharest's redevelopment, followed. Photographic exhibitions of Bucharest in the inter-war period were held in the summer of 1982, and when the large-scale demolition of the Uranus quarter began in 1984 a special edition

³² Quoted from E. Behr, 'Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite': *The Rise and Fall of the Ceașescu*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991, p. 194.

³³ *Ibid.* Some comic on-site incidents involving Ceașescu are related by Sweeney, *Life and Times...*, pp. 169-70.

³⁴ D.C. Giurescu, *The Razing of Romania's Past*, Washington, DC: US/ICOMOS, 1989, p. 42. Giurescu's work is the most comprehensive account of the effects of urban redevelopment in the 1980s on Romanian city centres.

of the review *Arhitectura* devoted to the architectural heritage of the area was published.³⁵ With one exception, all the buildings in the district were demolished: villas, one- and two-storey houses, small blocks of flats and public buildings. Only the sixteenth-century Mihai Vodă church and bell-tower survived, being moved 225 metres in 1985 to be hemmed in by new tall blocks of flats. In 1984, five Orthodox churches were razed, in the following year three others, in 1986 three more and a synagogue, and in 1986 six churches. Several more were moved and screened off entirely by new buildings.³⁶

No protest was heard from the senior Orthodox clergy. By contrast, on 14 December 1984, a letter signed by three members of the Central State Commission for National Cultural Patrimony—Professor Grigore Ionescu, an architect, Dr Răzvan Theodorescu, an art historian, and Professor Dinu Giurescu, a historian of Romanian culture—was sent to the press and propaganda section of the Party Central Committee, calling for a halt to the demolition of the Văcărești monastery. Although the monastery and its associated buildings had been used as a prison between 1864 and 1970, restoration work on its internal decoration, which included paintings of saints in the Byzantine style, had begun in 1974. The same letter was sent a month later with the addition of four other signatures, those of archaeologists Professor Dionisie Pippidi and Dr Radu Popa, the art historian Dr Vasile Drăguț and the architect Dr Aurelian Triscu. A third letter, signed by Ionescu, Giurescu, Theodorescu, Drăguț and Dr Virgil Căndea, head of the *România* association, the propaganda body directed at *émigrés*, was sent on 22 October 1985.³⁷ All were to no avail.

Other historical monuments destroyed were the nineteenth-century Brâncovenesc hospital and, on a smaller scale, the house of Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940), the distinguished Romanian historian and former Prime Minister, located at 6 Boulevard Ilie Pintilie. The demolition had taken on 2 July 1986, despite the fact that the mayor's office in Bucharest and the Institute of History bearing Iorga's name had complete formalities to have the house moved some 50 metres to avoid demolition. Andrei Pippidi, Iorga's

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

grandson, sent a letter of protest to several prominent cultural journals, including *România Literară*, *Luceafărul*, and *Contemporanul*, but the text was never published. So that his voice could be heard, Pippidi entrusted the letter to this author during a visit to Bucharest to be sent on to Vlad Georgescu, director of the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe, and it was duly broadcast in October 1986. 'The time comes when one learns to express aloud a protest thought out for a long time but never before uttered. The blind mutilation of our city has to be halted', he wrote.³⁸ In a sad dereliction of moral leadership, the Orthodox Church not only failed to give its support to these initiatives but even tried to stifle protest. A memorandum submitted by Dinu Giurescu to the Council of the Archbishopric of Bucharest on 8 December 1985 calling upon it to support his request for a cessation of church demolition was rejected.³⁹

If internal protest went unheeded, Romanian architects tried to arouse international concern. One, Ștefan Gane, set up an International Association for the Protection of Historical Monuments and Sites in Romania on 1 March 1985 in Paris with the aim of enlisting the support of government and non-government agencies concerning the demolition of central Bucharest. Its attempt to get UNESCO to intervene with the Romanian Government initially fell on deaf ears although the new Director General did react positively in the summer of 1987. Some scholars have argued that only after Gorbachev's policies highlighted Ceaușescu's 'old-fashioned Stalinism' did the Western media put the Romanian president's dictates and the human suffering they entailed under the microscope, with rural systematisation and the destruction of Bucharest being seen as two examples of a catalogue of aberrations which included a ban on birth control and reductions in domestic heating and food supplies. This is only partially true. As far as the major demolition in Bucharest was concerned, it only began a few months before Gorbachev's accession to power in March 1985 and therefore it was inevitable that more extensive press coverage should be commensurate with the pace of destruction. An analysis of press coverage of Romanian affairs in Britain, West

³⁸ D. Ionescu, 'More Protests against Demolition in Bucharest', *RFE Research*, vol. 11, no. 41 (10 October 1986), pp. 35-6.

³⁹ Giurescu, p. 52.

Germany, France, and the United States records a surge in articles on the demolition in 1985 which one suspects was prompted by the striking visual impact which this graphic illustration of Ceaușescu's megalomania offered.⁴⁰ The spotlight of media attention was redirected on Romania at the time of the workers' demonstrations in Brașov in November 1987 and it was in this ambience of heightened interest in the internal situation in the country that Ceaușescu scored a spectacular goal of his own by announcing in March 1988 his renewal of the drive for systematisation. Coupled with revelations about the demolition in Bucharest of churches engulfed by an ever-expanding drive to extend the area of the presidential complex, the systematisation plan led environmental groups in the West to co-ordinate both national and international actions of protests. The most effective in terms of attracting media attention and in providing more support to the Romanian people was *Opération Villages Roumains*.

This movement had its origins in Belgium where two young graphic artists, Paul Hermant and Vincent Magos, brought together on 22 December 1988 in Brussels a number of like-minded journalists, photographers, artists, architects and trade unionists and in conjunction with the League for Human Rights, mounted an adoption campaign of Romanian villages which was launched under the name *Opération Villages Roumains* in Brussels on 3 February 1989. Fearing that Ceaușescu's drive envisaged the destruction of up to 8,000 villages and aware of the secrecy surrounding the targeting of villages for systematisation, the campaigners proposed the adoption of all 13,000 villages by towns and villages throughout Europe. Hermant and Magos contacted interested groups in France, Switzerland, Hungary, West Germany and Britain with a view to establishing campaign headquarters in each of those countries which would act in coordination with the Brussels centre in adopting villages. Each national campaign was charged with inviting mayors and village committees to adopt a Romanian village (selected by the Brussels centre to avoid duplication); adoption rather than twinning was recommended since Romanian villages were not at liberty to enter into any kind of bilateral arrangement with a foreign partner. The French campaign began

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

on 9 March, the Swiss one on 16 March and the British one on 6 June.

Each adoptive township or village in Europe was asked to get its inhabitants to write letters to both the mayors of the Romanian villages and President Ceaușescu. In Britain the letter to the President took the following form:

President Ceaușescu

The village/small town/suburb of ... in the United Kingdom has decided to adopt one of the 13,000 villages in Romania presently threatened with destruction by your 'systematisation programme'.

I hereby register my concern and support for both the inhabitants and the environment of [name of adopted village].

I have undertaken to do everything in my power to assist in their preservation.

Signature

*Address*⁴¹

Tens of thousands of letters of this kind left European communities for Romania as the numbers of adoptive villages grew: by the beginning of May 1989, 231 communities in Belgium, ninety-five in France and forty-two in Switzerland had adopted Romanian villages. The British campaign – mounted in June with the backing of the Prince of Wales, who in an unprecedented political intervention by a member of the royal family had condemned the systematisation programme in a speech delivered on 27 April 1989 – had secured fifty-two adoptions by September.⁴²

⁴¹ Minutes of the Sub-Committee of the British Campaign for the Protection of Villages in Romania, 20 June 1989.

⁴² The speech, reprinted in *The Times* on 28 April 1989, made no concession to diplomacy:

We in this country are painfully aware of the trauma caused by uprooting traditional communities at the behest of 'benevolent', know-all planners... That process should have made us, therefore, all the more sensitive to the awful spectre of an entire society – not just certain districts – losing its roots and its ancient communities, which is what is happening today in a corner of Eastern Europe, in Romania. There President Ceaușescu has embarked on the wholesale destruction of his country's cultural and human heritage. What happened here in the 1960s is, of course, not comparable with the policy known as 'systematisation', which aims to transform Romania's rural environment into over 500 urban collectives

As soon as a village in the West adopted a Romanian one, the news was broadcast by the Romanian services of the BBC and RFE and visitors returning from Romania reported the gratitude expressed to them by Romanians for the outside support. In the autumn of 1989, children throughout Belgium built 250,000 small paper houses as a symbolic present to the children of Romania and exhibited them in the village of Floreffe. One year later, the exhibition occupied the vast floor of the 'House of the People'.

Through his plans for systematisation Ceauşescu succeeded in imprinting Romania upon the consciousness of Europe for only the second time in his career. The first occasion had been his denunciation on 21 August 1968 of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. But whereas then he won the admiration of Europe and the rest of the world for his courageous defiance of the Soviet Union, his claim in 1989 was to one of notoriety. Ceauşescu became the ogre of Europe, and Romania was attracting attention for all the wrong reasons. The international media probed deeper into the character of his repressive regime and the Romanian Foreign Ministry was instructed in May 1989 to counter the *Opération Villages Roumains* campaign with the claim that the policy of systematisation was to be applied more slowly. In fact, Ceauşescu's plans continued to be carried out to the letter. On 24 May, a large number of private houses were demolished in the villages of Otopeni, Dimieni and Odăile to the north of Bucharest and their rubble taken in 200 dump trucks and deposited in two large pits.⁴³ The dislodged population of the three villages were re-housed in four-storey apartment blocks in Otopeni. A record

designated as 'agro-industrial complexes'. The object is to reshape the nation's identity, to create a new type of person, utterly subordinate to its dreams. To achieve this, President Ceauşescu has set about destroying the cities and villages of his country and replacing them with blocks of flats which are a repetition of failed 1960s social engineering, mixed with the atmosphere of George Orwell's 1984...

The Chairman of the British Campaign was Sir Bernard Braine. Members of the Sub-Committee were Victoria Clark, Jessica Douglas-Home, Simon George, John Laughland, Charmian Marshall, Maria Nalder, Iolanda Stranescu, Malcolm Taylor, Dr Eugene Varallja, Mary Walsh and Dennis Deletant. The Prince of Wales instructed his Civic Trust to place rooms in its headquarters in Carlton Gardens at the disposal of the campaign.

⁴³ A. Gavrilăscu, 'Otopeni: agonia unui oraş rămas sat', *Adevărul*, 1 August 1991, p. 1.

of the villages where major demolition took place is presented in the annex to this chapter. In the case of Buda and Odoreanu in the county of Giurgiu, these were evacuated to make way for a large reservoir being constructed as part of the Bucharest–Danube canal.

Whether, as some foreign diplomats alleged, the international campaign eventually led Ceaușescu to temper his policy of bulldozing homes in the summer and autumn of 1989 is an open question but at least there appears to be no evidence that it was accelerated, as was the case with the works to complete the presidential complex in the centre of Bucharest. What the campaign did achieve was to let the Romanian people know that their villages would not, as one campaigner has written, borrowing a line from Dylan Thomas, ‘go silent into that dark night’, forgotten by the rest of Europe.⁴⁴ What no one associated with the campaign could have foreseen was that the links established between communities throughout Europe and the villages in Romania provided the perfect springboard for humanitarian aid to be channelled to an identifiable destination after Ceaușescu’s overthrow. The full enormity of the dictator’s rule and the suffering it caused prompted adoptive communities in Europe to target their own Romanian villages as recipients of food, clothing, medicines and practical aid. Hospitals and children’s homes in the area became the special focus of attention. Thousands of ordinary European citizens travelled overland in convoys to their own adopted village with aid supplies and, having assessed the needs of the Romanian community, made return visits.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ J. Loraine, *‘Operation Ursoaia’: Porlock’s Village in Romania*, privately printed, 1990.

⁴⁵ A moving, but by no means unique, example of the determination and generosity of spirit of many such volunteers is provided by Joan Loraine from the village of Porlock in Somerset, England. She wrote an account of her visit to her adopted village of Ursoaia in the county of Vrancea under the title *‘Operation Ursoaia’: Porlock’s Village in Romania*, which was privately printed in 1990. In gauging the impact of her visit, this letter of thanks speaks for itself:

Dear Villagers of Porlock,

In the name of the 260 inhabitants of Ursoaia, we convey the best wishes for the health of the English people and yourselves. We never imagined that someone from England would come to our village so remote and hidden in the hills. The children were amazed, for they had never seen things of the kind that you brought them. Maybe things would have been different for them had not

The fact that the systematisation scheme was one of the first measures rescinded by the provisional government in late December 1989 shows how far it had become synonymous with the worst excesses of the Ceaușescu regime. While providing an eloquent example of the degree to which the Romanian state intervened in the lives of its citizens, the scheme also highlighted the distinctive features of the planning process in Romania. At the national economic level, systematisation, with its emphasis on the homogenisation of town and country, was an adjunct of the policy of rapid industrialisation, in which the needs of communities were subordinated to those of the national economy. National planning was concentrated in the centre in the hands of a huge state bureaucracy – a method which prevented the establishment of strong regional forces which might exert pressure for duplication of factories and generally complicate choosing of locations.

It could be argued that, in this aspect of national economic planning, Romania under Ceaușescu was not essentially different from any other Socialist country. However, where it was unique among East European Socialist regimes was in the degree to which citizens were forced to participate in the implementation of plans. Incessant campaigns were mounted in the national press and at the local Party meetings as part and parcel of the mobilisation tactics employed by the regime to demonstrate support for its leader. The word 'mobilisation' is used deliberately since, with the development of Ceaușescu's personality cult after his appointment as President in 1974, rallies demonstrating support for the leader were regularly organised upon virtual military lines.

At the human level, this method of planning allowed no discussion either of the planning goals or of their execution. Planning initiatives remained the monopoly of Ceaușescu and they were executed often against the interests of the very citizens who were alleged to have expressed support for them through mass rallies. Implementing systematisation in some areas was tantamount to

the tyrant Ceaușescu been a dictator for 25 years. We had no one to complain to because Ceaușescu ignored the constitution.

On behalf of the inhabitants of Ursoaia, we thank you again wholeheartedly for the help you have given us and for a gesture we did not think that we would experience. It would give us great pleasure to welcome you in the summer of 1990. Please keep in touch by writing to me. We will never forget you.

Ion Bouros, Ursoaia

institutionalised vandalism and exhibited a total disregard for human dignity. The cynical nature of Ceaușescu's regime was chillingly demonstrated by the attempt of local Party authorities to persuade villagers, in communities like Vlădiceasca north of Bucharest, to demolish their own houses in order to indicate to the outside world that they willingly concurred with the State's directives. Unmoved by their descent to this level of ignominy, the authorities went even further by making a charge of 2,000 *lei* on villagers unwilling to follow their orders for the recourse to bulldozers.

Such insensitivity was one of the products of the President's megalomania but there were also many others in the realm of planning which proved to be economic and ecological disasters. David Turnock has highlighted the energy project at Anina, not far from the city of Reșița in south-western Romania. Ceaușescu's idea was to dig out extremely low-grade bitumen coal from huge open quarries to fuel a new power station. The costs of the scheme were immense because it involved the rebuilding of houses which required protection from the quarries and because Ceaușescu insisted on placing the power station immediately adjacent to the quarries, thus creating in the President's mind the ideal Socialist landscape. However, this decision involved pumping cooling water some 10 km. to an elevated site from a specially constructed lake; in fact, the planners had recommended the siting of the power station at a nearby location where water would have been more easily obtainable from a river. The ecological damage has been considerable: rivers have been polluted with dust which contains cancerous substances because of incomplete processing, the air has been polluted because the power station chimney was set too low and is inadequately filtered and the landscape has been disfigured by extensive excavation.⁴⁶

Systematisation under Ceaușescu was not just a planning process; it was an attempt at social engineering. It threatened to destroy traditional skills, a way of life linked with the land and the individuality of the village and its inhabitants. Ceaușescu's obstinacy procured a success, in his terms, for his plan but its execution trampled on the moral heart of his citizens. The plan, like so many of his other infamous edicts, such as the abortion decree,

⁴⁶ D. Turnock, 'The Reșița Industrial Complex: Perspectives in Historical Geography', *GeoJournal*, 29 January 1993, p. 100.

eventually provoked a reaction in that moral heart which led to the dictator's downfall. Few localities in Romania do not show the mark of systematisation; the suffering that the plan caused is less easy to identify.

ANNEX

SOME VILLAGES WHERE MAJOR DEMOLITION TOOK PLACE

GIURGIU COUNTY

Buda (flooded), Cotenii, Ordoreanu (flooded), Podu Ilfovățului

IALOMIȚA COUNTY

Amara Nouă, Chiroiu-Pămînteni, Livedea, Motîlva, Movileanca, Valea Bisericii

ILFOV AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Ciofliceni, Dimieni, Ghermănești, Vlădiceasca

PRAHOVA COUNTY

Puchenii-Moșneni

TIMIȘ COUNTY

Tomnatic, Vizejdia

AGRO-INDUSTRIAL CENTRES

REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN COMPLETED

BIHOR COUNTY

Diosig

BOTOȘAN COUNTY

Flămînzii

CONSTANȚA COUNTY

Cobadin

COVASNA COUNTY

Cernat

IALOMIȚA COUNTY

Amara

MARAMUREȘ COUNTY

Seini

OLT COUNTY

Scornicești

SATU MARE

Petreşti

TELEORMAN COUNTY

Drăgăneşti-Vlaşca

TIMIŞ COUNTY

Lovrin

Source: Sînteia, 11 April 1989, pp. 1-2; *România literară*, 2 March 1989, p. 13.

THE SECURITATE AND REPRESSION, 1978-1989

The defection of Ion Mihai Pacepa to the United States in late July 1978 was one of the greatest blows ever delivered to an East European intelligence agency. It came at a time in Romania when the euphoria of 1968 had evaporated and the improvement in living standards had come to a halt. Soviet opposition to Romania's rapid industrialisation in the 1960s had driven Ceaușescu to turn to the West for loans, but the country's creditworthiness had been assessed on over-optimistic estimates of its ability to repay through exports since these exports proved to be of poor quality. Not only did the exports fail to generate the anticipated income but the energy-intensive heavy industry plants became increasingly voracious due to inefficient running. In the mid-1970s Ceaușescu expanded Romania's oil-refining capacity in excess of the country's own domestic output and, in 1976, the country was forced to begin the import of crude oil. When the price of oil soared on the international market in 1978, Romania was caught out and soon faced a major trade deficit; the problem was exacerbated by the revolution in Iran, a chief supplier to Romania of oil, which put a halt to deliveries.

As deputy head of the DIE and a deputy minister of the Interior, Pacepa was one of the highest-ranking intelligence and security officials ever to defect from the Soviet bloc. Pacepa tells us that he was born in Bucharest in 1928. His father came from what is today Slovakia and had moved to Transylvania while the province was under Hungarian rule before settling in Bucharest in 1920. Ion Pacepa studied at the Bucharest Polytechnic from 1947 until 3 January 1951, when he was recruited into the DGSP. In his book *Moștenirea Kremlinului* (The Kremlin's legacy) he wrote that he was assigned to the Directorate of Counter-sabotage of the

Securitate.¹ Either in March 1954 or 1955,² he was transferred to the Directorate of Foreign Intelligence (Directorate I), headed at that time by Maj. Gen. Vasile Vîlcu, a Bulgarian who had worked in the Foreign Intelligence Directorate of the NKGB and had been made chief of the Romanian Intelligence Directorate in 1952.

In 1957, Pacepa was sent to work under cover as the deputy head of the Romanian commercial mission at Frankfurt in West Germany. He returned in the following year after his cover was blown by two other Romanian intelligence officers who were arrested in West Germany in the act of receiving secret documents from the Romanian-born wife of an American officer.³ In October 1959, Pacepa was appointed by Alexandru Drăghici, Minister of the Interior, as head of the technical department of Directorate I, i.e. as head of Romanian industrial espionage. Like all Romanian foreign intelligence activity, such espionage was co-ordinated by the KGB's Foreign Intelligence Directorate and Pacepa was given his instructions by the Soviet technical adviser to Drăghici, whom he named as Colonel Boris Alexeivici Kotov.⁴ When Kotov, together with the other KGB counsellors, was withdrawn at Dej's request in December 1964, the way was clear for priority to be given to Romanian needs in the realm of industrial espionage, needs which were dictated by Ceauşescu. In April 1972, the existing directorate was rechristened *Departamentul de Informații Externe* (DIE) and its head, Col. Gen. Gheorghe Nicolae Doicaru, became Ceauşescu's national security adviser. Pacepa was appointed Doicaru's deputy in 1973 and in this capacity oversaw most of Romanian foreign intelligence activity, some of which he described in his book *Red Horizons*, carefully avoiding mention of his own part in them.

As a result of Pacepa's defection, the DIE network was totally destroyed and Ceauşescu himself was severely embarrassed internationally, for Pacepa's information damaged Romania's partners

¹ Pacepa, *Moștenirea Kremlinului*, p. 44. Pacepa classified this Directorate as Directorate IVa but in fact, in March 1951 according to *Securitate* records, this Directorate was known as Directorate C and only received the designation IV some time later.

² Pacepa gives both years, *Ibid.*, pp. 152-4.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

in clandestine activities. Pacepa also proved a time-bomb for Ceaușescu since his public revelations almost ten years later in his book *Red Horizons* dispelled any remaining traces of the international respectability which the Romanian leader had attempted to preserve for himself as the potential successor to Tito as a spokesman for the non-aligned countries, for it exposed his alleged direct involvement in murder, blackmail, drug-smuggling and kidnapping. At the same time, the serialisation of the book on Radio Free Europe in 1989 served only to confirm Romania's own suspicions of the criminal behaviour of Ceaușescu and his family and this completely punctured the inflated myths of the personality cult.

Paradoxically, Pacepa's flight seems to have resulted from the *Securitate's* progress in identifying him as the source of intelligence leaked to the CIA. Working on information supplied by the KGB, Maj. Gen. Mihai Caraman, head of the special investigative and surveillance unit 'F' of the *Securitate*, monitored the movements of members of the SD brigade and details of this surveillance were passed on to Pacepa. Fearing that the net was closing in on him, Pacepa used the opportunity of a visit to Bremen for negotiations with the Fokker company over a joint project with Romania to build an aircraft to alert his American contacts. A special plane was sent to West Germany to take him to Washington, where he arrived on 28 July.⁵ News of his disappearance was published in *Die Welt* on 8 August and confirmation that he had defected came two days later from Washington.⁶

There followed the greatest purge amongst the intelligence and security services in Communist Romania. According to Pacepa, a third of the Council of Ministers was demoted, twenty-two ambassadors replaced and more than a dozen high-ranking security officers arrested.⁷ Feverish efforts were made to withdraw DIE officers abroad, some of whom chose to defect once uncovered. In 1978, the DIE was said by Pacepa to have 560 legal and clandestine officers and 1,100 'associates' in the Ministry of Foreign Trade. Their numbers had been boosted as a result of a secret

⁵ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 424.

⁶ *RFE Research, Romanian SR/22* (8 September 1978), p. 13.

⁷ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 425.

decree signed by Ceaușescu in 1973 which empowered the DIE to recruit anyone working in the Foreign Ministry or in the Ministry for Foreign Trade and to pay them an extra salary. Some 70 per cent of the personnel in the trade legations in the West and in the Third World were undercover DIE officers, while the rest, with the exception of Marin Ceaușescu, head of the commercial office in Vienna, were collaborators of the DIE. In the Ministry of Foreign Trade, five deputy ministers and eleven directors were undercover DIE officers. The catalogue of infiltration continued: the General Directorate of Customs was headed by an undercover DIE officer and thirty-eight of the forty-one directors of foreign trade companies were officers or collaborators of the DIE.⁸

A major casualty of Pacepa's flight was the Interior Minister Teodor Coman. On 5 September, it was reported that he had been 'released' from his office by presidential decree and replaced by George Homosțean, First Secretary of the Alba County Party.⁹ Personnel changes in the DIE were also to be expected. Pacepa's boss, Lieut. Gen. Alexandru Dănescu, appointed by Ceaușescu as recently as March 1978, was removed in October and, allegedly under Elena Ceaușescu's orders, the organisation was reorganised and styled the CIE (*Centrul de Informații Externe*). Romus Dima was appointed its chief. Doicaru, another former boss, had ceased to be security adviser to Ceaușescu and was made Minister of Tourism, a move which seemed to indicate a greater emphasis on intelligence gathering by using Romanian tourists and residents abroad. But he too was a Pacepa victim; he was dismissed as Minister of Tourism on 15 August, a sign that Ceaușescu's anger against his intelligence officers went extremely deep.

This upheaval in the Romanian intelligence and security services compounded a series of earlier organisational changes affecting the Ministry of the Interior, the first of which had resulted from the miners' strike in the Jiu Valley in August 1977. Some officials had been replaced and structural changes had been introduced into the Ministry which were embodied in a State Council decree published on 8 April 1978.¹⁰ The most significant of these was

⁸ Pacepa, *Moștenirea Kremlinului*, p. 285.

⁹ *Sân-teia*, 5 December 1978. Coman's deputy, Ion Savu, was also replaced.

¹⁰ *RFE Research, Romania* SR /26 (12 August 1977), p. 1.

the recreation of a Department of State Security *Departamentul Securității Statului* (DSS) within the Ministry of the Interior. Tudor Postelnicu, the Party secretary of Buzău county and a friend of Ceașescu's son Nicu, was appointed Minister State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior and head of the DSS in March 1978.

This restoration of the department to its position of authority as that before the 1968 reform was one signal of an end to the period of 'Socialist legality' trumpeted by Ceașescu a decade earlier; the second was the extension of the Ministry's remit to include 'defence of the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity' of the state. This expansion of the Ministry's duties also required it to be responsible for security matters not just to the Party's Central Committee, where there was a secretary charged with responsibility for the armed forces and security (at the time of the 1989 revolution this was Col. Gen. Ion Coman), but also to the Supreme Command of the Romanian Armed Forces, of which Ceașescu was chairman.¹¹ In practice, both the minister and the head of the DSS reported directly to Ceașescu himself. The increased importance assigned to the DSS and the control over it with which Ceașescu invested himself invites parallels with the prescriptive control exercised by the *Securitate* of the 1950s. The promotion of one of the President's brothers, Nicolae Andruța Ceașescu, to the rank of Lieutenant General and to the post of commandant of the officer training school for the *trupele de securitate* at Băneasa on the outskirts of Bucharest emphasised that control.

A mark of the increased importance of the DSS was its elevation to the rank of ministry. A new area of concern was the spread of international terrorism and the DSS was charged with 'the activity of preventing, detecting, neutralising and liquidating terrorist actions on Romania's territory'. The specific task of combating terrorists was given to a special anti-terrorist unit known by its acronym of USLA (*Unitate Specială de Luptă Antiteroristă*). Its first commander was Colonel Ștefan Blaga and its strength in 1989 was 795 officers and men.

The presence of large numbers of Arab students in Romanian universities raised fears that the internecine struggles within the

¹¹ RFE Research, Romania SR/12 (11 May 1978), p. 11.

various factions of the Palestinian Liberation Movement would spill over into Romania. These fears were borne out on 4 December 1984 when the Second Secretary at the Jordanian Embassy was shot dead outside the Bucharest hotel in the capital. On 12 August 1985, a twenty-seven-year-old Palestinian studying in Bucharest, was arrested for the murder and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. In 1988, in the wake of decree no. 11 issued by Ceaușescu, his sentence was reduced by half, and in September 1991, under article 60 of the Penal Code, it was cut by another four years, with the result that on 3 September 1991 he was released from Galați gaol and left the country.¹²

In significant addition to the combating of terrorism, the DSS embraced the propagation of the personality cult of Ceaușescu and the silencing of the regime's critics abroad. Promoting the cult in the wake of Ceaușescu's 'election' to the new post of President of the Republic in March 1974 and its extension to his wife Elena (the second most important figure in the Party and State after her appointment as First Deputy Prime Minister in March 1980), absorbed more and more of the DSS's resources. Disbursements were made from special hard-currency accounts, controlled by an agency within the CIE known as AVS (*Agenții de Valută Străină*), to pay foreign publishers to publish hagiographies of Ceaușescu and the ghost-written studies on chemistry attributed to his wife, 'the scholar of world-renown'. Bucharest sources allege that the occasion for the defection of one CIE agent was his assignment to pay a Western publisher a sum of money for publication of one of Elena's 'studies'.

Furtherance of the cult was assumed by Elena who, from 1985, took especial interest in it and regularly browbeat the successive Central Committee propaganda secretaries to ensure that public meetings were festooned with photographs of the happy couple. She became increasingly protective of her husband as his diabetes seemed to be accelerating both his ageing and his irascibility; it was for this reason that she frustrated the attempts of Maj. Gen. Emil Macri, the head of the Second Directorate, to discuss with the President the true state of the country's disastrous economic plight.¹³ That Ceaușescu knew something of the real situation

¹² *România liberă*, 16 June 1993, p. 16.

¹³ Private information.

was clear from the disclosure on Romanian television after the Revolution of documents from his summer residence at Neptun on the Black Sea; they contained two columns of harvest figures, one true and the other false. It was the latter set which he had communicated to the Politburo in the autumn of 1989.

The silencing of critics abroad of Ceașescu was carried out as assiduously. Emil Georgescu had been working as a programme editor for Radio Free Europe since January 1974, a few weeks after his defection from Romania. He was seriously injured in a car accident staged by a team of French drug smugglers working for the DIE. Pacepa alleges that it was Ceașescu himself who gave the order for Georgescu to be silenced because of his barbed critiques of the personality cult.¹⁴ Six months later, Georgescu was back at work, which prompted a DIE disinformation operation to compromise him. Signed and anonymous letters sent to Radio Free Europe at the behest of the DIE insinuated that Georgescu had been in receipt of payments to secure exit visas for Romanians wishing to emigrate. An unsuccessful blackmail operation run by Maj. Gen. Eugen Luchian, head of the Visa and Passport Office, was mounted to persuade Georgescu to leave his post at Radio Free Europe in return for an exit visa for his mother in Bucharest. Georgescu continued his acerbic broadcasts until 28 July 1981, when he was stabbed twenty-two times by two French citizens while leaving his Munich home. Georgescu, despite being severely wounded, survived this attempt on his life and his attackers were arrested. They refused to give any information about who had hired them and, on 21 July 1982, were sentenced to eleven years and four and a half years respectively for attempted murder. In its report on the crime, the West German security service concluded that 'other persons from the Romanian intelligence service are said to have been given the assignment of liquidating the Romanian *émigré* once and for all'.¹⁵

The case of Monica Lovinescu, the daughter of a distinguished literary critic who had taken refuge in France after the war, was offered by Pacepa as further evidence of Ceașescu's direct involvement in such actions. Her regular cultural broadcasts on

¹⁴ Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 163.

¹⁵ Quoted from Pacepa, *Red Horizons*, p. 164.

Radio Free Europe, in which she criticised with bitter sarcasm Ceaușescu's attempts to subordinate Romanian literature to his own ends, so infuriated the Romanian leader that it was he himself who gave orders for her to be silenced. Pațepa alleged that a CIE officer, Maj. Gheorghe Șerbănescu, who was a specialist in Arabic and liaison officer with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), received instructions from Ceaușescu to beat up Lovinescu so savagely 'as to prevent her writing and talking for the rest of her days'. Șerbănescu engaged three PLO members and instructed them as to how to carry out the operation. One of the men, disguised as a postman, rang the doorbell of Lovinescu's Paris flat and when she answered, the other two rushed in and punched her repeatedly in the face and about the body.¹⁶

Other Romanian opponents of the regime were also targets. Paul Goma was one of three Romanian *émigrés* to whom parcel bombs were addressed from Madrid in February 1981. On 13 January 1982, Matei Pavel Haiducu (real name Major Hirsch), a CIE agent based in France to carry out industrial espionage, allegedly received orders from the CIE head Lieut. Gen. Nicolae Pleșiță to murder both Paul Goma and another dissident writer, Virgil Tănase, by injecting them with a special poison designed to provoke cardiac arrest.¹⁷

Pleșiță's plans backfired with Haiducu's defection in July 1982 which proved the most serious in a series of embarrassing setbacks for the CIE under Pleșiță's direction. A presidential decree issued on 29 November 1984 releasing Pleșiță from the position of First Deputy Minister meant implicitly his removal as head of the CIE. He was relegated to the position of commandant of the *Securitate* training school at Gradiștea, some 40 kilometres south of Bucharest, and replaced as CIE chief by Lieutenant General Aristotel Stamatoiu. The attempts by Pleșiță to make good some of the damage caused by Pacepa's defection were compromised by a succession of failures which served to erode still further Ceaușescu's crumbling image abroad.¹⁸ The string of embarrassments

¹⁶ Pacepa, *Moștenirea Kremlinului*, p. 493. Nonetheless she was able to resume work a few weeks later.

¹⁷ See Chapter 7; see also Haiducu, *J'ai refusé de tuer*, 1984.

¹⁸ Pleșiță himself had briefly been a casualty of Pacepa's flight. A career officer in the *Securitate*, his name first appeared in the Romanian press in May 1958 when he was reported to have been awarded the Romanian People's Republic Star, Fourth

siță began in October 1980 when the West German Federal Prosecutor's Office reported the arrest of a Romanian citizen for spying on emigrants to West Germany for the CIE. The following month, Florian Rotaru, a code clerk at the Romanian embassy in Vienna, defected to West Germany with a 50 kilogram postbag containing classified information. He was then flown to the United States. In March 1981, an Austrian police chief was arrested in Vienna on charges of spying for Romania.¹⁹ In the summer of 1982 came Haiducu's defection. He told the French secret service of Pleșiță's alleged instructions to him to kill Goma and Tănase and, as a direct result, President Mitterrand cancelled a visit to Romania in July. In January 1983, a French court sentenced Traian Munteanu, a Romanian computer technician, to two years in jail for espionage; six months later Mihai Manole, a thirty-seven-year-old Romanian-born engineer who was a naturalised French citizen working for a shipbuilding firm in Dieppe, was arrested by the French police and charged with industrial espionage on behalf of Romania. In August of that year, three Romanian diplomats and one employee of the Romanian Embassy were expelled from Belgium on charges of spying against NATO.²⁰

This catalogue of disaster continued into 1984. A Romanian embassy employee, Nicolae Iosif, was found dead outside the Embassy in Paris in April with a dagger beside his body. In October, a CIE cipher officer from the Romanian embassy in Bonn asked for asylum during Ceaușescu's visit to West Germany. It was later reported that five Romanian diplomats, named as Counsellor Constantin Ciobanu, First Secretary Ioan Lupu, Second Secretaries Dan Mihoc and Ion Grecu and Third Secretary Ion Constantin, had been expelled from West Germany. Shortly afterwards, Haiducu appeared on French television and declared that the

Class, as a captain in the Ministry of the Interior. In the 1970s he was given rapid promotion within the Party and at the Eleventh Party Congress in 1974 was elected a member of the Auditing Commission. In December 1976 he was listed as Major General and First Deputy Minister of the Interior at a ceremony at the Interior Ministry's officers' school at Băneasa.

¹⁹ R. de Fleurs, 'Are there Problems in the Secret Service?', *RFE Research Romania SR/4*, vol. 10, no. 9 (22 February 1985), p. 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Romanian Ambassador to France, Dumitru Aninoiu, and his press attaché Ion Badea, were CIE agents.²¹

Ceauşescu's ability to translate his anger at his critics abroad into violence against their persons put Western security services on the alert. Early in 1989, Ion Raţiu, a prominent *émigré* critic of Ceauşescu, received word from West German sources that two women agents had been sent to assassinate him, and he was accordingly offered protection. Even the author of this book was considered significant enough to warrant the ambiguous warning from an official in the Romanian Foreign Ministry, transmitted via a British visitor in July 1989, that he was 'number seven on the *Securitate's* list'.

At home, the brutality of some of these beatings administered to opponents of the regime was evident from the fate of Gheorghe Ursu, an engineer from Bucharest who was arrested on 21 September 1985 for keeping a diary and correspondence critical of the Ceauşescus. He was held at the *Securitate* headquarters on Calea Rahovei where he was beaten by his interrogators, and moved because of his injuries to the hospital of Jilava prison where he died on 17 November. An inquiry in March 1990 revealed that Ursu had died as a result of repeated blows with a heavy object to his abdomen.²²

By contrast, Mariana Celac, a leading opponent of Ceauşescu's reconstruction programme in Bucharest, described the measures taken against her by the *Securitate* as psychological harassment; no physical violence was used against her. She was summoned to a *Securitate* address for questioning, then kept waiting; she was finally interrogated by individuals who had a detailed record of her activities.²³

Whilst not relying on the extremes of terror pursued during the early years of Communist rule in Romania, the Ceauşescu regime showed that it was capable of resorting to the practices of the past in order to maintain its dominance of Romanian society. The institutions and legal codification of coercion remained unchanged. Some provisions of the Penal Code remained dormant until Ceauşescu found it convenient to resuscitate them. Such

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² G. Ursu, *Europa Mea*, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1991, p. 356.

²³ Interview with M. Celac, 22 February 1991.

was the case with the decree requiring the registration of typewriters with the police which was revived in a decree which came into force in April 1983 and with a provision of Dej, introduced first in 1958, which made failing to report a conversation with a foreigner a criminal offence (Decree no. 408 of December 1985). Photocopying machines were a rarity and the few that were available in national libraries were closely supervised and special permission was required for their use. The materials and number of copies made were carefully recorded by a librarian.

The degree of Ceaușescu's interference with the lives of individuals was most potently illustrated by measures of family planning. Abortion on demand had been legalised in 1957 and became the principal means of family planning. When the 1966 birth rate dropped to fourteen per thousand people (much the same as in Britain), thereby heralding a decline in the workforce and a threat to the pace of the country's industrialisation, the law was adjusted to allow abortion only to women over forty, mothers of four or more children, victims of rape and incest, and in cases of possible foetal abnormality. After the 1966 law went into effect, the abortion-related mortality rate among Romanian women increased to a level ten times that of any other European country. Since contraceptives, while not illegal, were virtually unobtainable, many women used abortion as the main method of birth control and were forced to obtain it illegally.

From a peak in 1969 of twenty-one per thousand people, the birth rate showed an annual decline thereafter, due both to the increase in the number of illegal abortions and the fall in living standards in the late 1970s. Figures for 1981 showing the birth rate at 6 per 1,000 people led Ceaușescu to insist that steps be taken to reverse this trend. Prime Minister Constantin Dăscălescu took up this theme in a speech in September 1983. In March 1984, Ceaușescu issued a summons before a gathering of National Women's Councils in Bucharest to 'breed, comrade women, it is your patriotic duty'.²⁴ At the same time, he issued one of his notorious unpublished orders that women of childbearing age were to be subjected to compulsory gynaecological examination to check that they were not breaking the law by using contraceptive

²⁴ David Aspinall (D. Deletant), 'Romania: Queues and Personality Cults', *op. cit.*, p. 4.

devices. A lady doctor told this author that she was required to conduct monthly examinations of factory women in Bucharest, to ask each one of them if she was pregnant and if not, why not. In fact, she consistently falsified records in the patients' favour and sold contraceptive pills to them which she had obtained from other East European countries.

To bolster the drive to increase the birth rate, Ceauşescu introduced punitive additional taxation for all childless couples over twenty-five. In 1986, he raised the minimum age for women to be allowed an abortion from forty to forty-five and lowered the age at which women could marry from sixteen to fifteen. Although the birth rate did rise between 1986 and 1988, it fell again in 1989 to sixteen per thousand. But the measures led to tragedy. There was a dramatic increase in back-street and self-induced abortions, especially among young working women, despite the harsh penalties given to those involved in them. Doctors risked fines and imprisonment if they gave medical help without legal authorisation when self-induced abortions went wrong and the delays in securing this often led to deaths. *Securitate* officers were assigned to every maternity hospital to ensure that the provisions of the abortion law were strictly observed, although in some cases they turned a blind eye. One of this author's most harrowing experiences of Romania was the sight in the bathroom of a Bucharest hospital in December 1989 of a pile of dead fetuses.

The figures for deaths among Romanian women resulting from the anti-abortion law are the single most powerful indictment of the inhumanity of Ceauşescu's regime. In the twenty-three years of its enforcement, the law caused the death of over 10,000 women from unsafe abortions. The majority died from post-abortion haemorrhage and blood poisoning.²⁵ The black irony of this tragedy is that it took place in a country whose 'First Lady', Elena Ceauşescu, was lauded in its media as the 'Woman-Mother' in a land with a 'wondrous cult of Women-Mothers'.²⁶

Paranoia about any opposition to Ceauşescu was another hallmark of the regime. This was exemplified most graphically in 1982 by the so-called 'Transcendental Meditation' affair. A

²⁵ P. Stephenson *et al.*, 'The Public Health Consequences of Restricted Abortion—Lessons from Romania', *American Journal of Public Health* (October 1992), pp. 1328–31.

²⁶ *Orizont*, 6 January 1984.

number of questions remain unanswered about this episode, not least why the authorities, once having permitted the practice of yoga whose techniques were introduced in Bucharest by an instructor based in Switzerland, should then have clamped down upon the practising group whose members included a number of promising writers and artists. They perhaps feared that by meeting together the group could transfer thoughts to each other! Mystery also surrounds the part played by the instructor whom a Romanian newspaper named after the Revolution as Nicolae Stoian, a Romanian *émigré* who later worked for the Romanian section of the BBC World Service.²⁷ According to the paper, Stoian visited Bucharest in the winter of 1977 in order to expound the virtues of Transcendental Meditation and was received by Elena Ceașescu herself. He was given the opportunity, the newspaper alleged, to hold yoga classes in the Institute of Education and Psychology Research in Bucharest and over four years attracted a considerable audience among the cream of Romania's intellectuals. All went well until early 1982 when the official publication of the Ministry of the Interior, *Pentru Patrie*, accused the meditation group of plotting to take Romania out of the Warsaw Pact. There followed a purge which was only surpassed in the Ceașescu era by the shake-up following Pacepa's defection. Among the members of the group were Aneta Spornic, a protégé of Elena Ceașescu, who was dismissed from her post as Minister of Education, senior Party members Marin Rădoi and Petre Gheorghe, who were censored, two Minister of the Interior generals, Vasile Maior and Gheorghe Zagoneanu, Marin Sorescu, the prominent poet and dramatist, and Andrei Pleșu, the future Minister of Culture in the first post-revolutionary government. Pleșu was vilified by the local Party secretary of his Union of Fine Artists and, like Sorescu, was hounded for months by the *Securitate*. Stoian was simply expelled from the country. Documents published after the Revolution revealed that a list of several hundred members of the group was passed on 22 July 1982 by Ion Popa, secretary of the Bucharest Party Committee, to the then head of the *Securitate*, Tudor Postelnicu. Six days later, Postelnicu sent Popa several hundred files on the members, presumably as the basis for the attacks made on them in local Party meetings.

²⁷ *România liberă*, 20 March 1992, p. 3.

The unresolved questions about this curious affair prompted a rash of wild speculation. Some suggested after the Revolution that it was all a dastardly plot by the *Securitate* to identify potential dissidents; if so, then why let the group practise yoga for four years? Others saw the hand of the KGB at work, suggesting to Ceaușescu that the meditation group was part of a Western plot to cement an opposition to him and urging him to dissolve it. Still others suggested that the KGB was behind the whole thing in the first place and shared the motives attributed to the West. In the case of this latter scenario, the Soviet action was difficult to reconcile with Silviu Brucan's account of Soviet unwillingness to help the anti-Ceaușescu plotters who were allegedly active at this time.²⁸

Sycophancy played a major part in the support given to Ceaușescu by the *nomenklatura*. As General Pleșiță's instructions to Haiducu demonstrated, it was a motive behind actions in the CIE. This was also true of the *Securitate*. But Ceaușescu was clever enough to realise that his own position of personal dominance was ultimately dependent on the loyalty of the *Securitate*. He therefore paid them well, giving them higher salaries than those received by their colleagues of the same rank in the armed forces. A lieutenant colonel in the *Securitate* received a monthly salary of 7,800 lei in December 1989, a thousand lei more than his counterpart in the army and more than double the average. *Securitate* officers had access to the special shops and facilities reserved for senior Party members, whereas their army counterparts did not. Moreover, instead of ensuring the country's defence, the role of the army was relegated to that of providing a cheap labour force for the megalomaniacal building projects that Ceaușescu initiated. As Draconian economic measures fuelled even greater and more widespread disaffection with his policies in the mid-1980s, Ceaușescu became even more dependent on coercion for the maintenance of his rule and this dependence necessitated closer supervision of the Ministry of the Interior. These considerations led him to promote the family friend Postelnicu to the position of Minister of the Interior on 3 October 1987. His successor as Minister State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior and head of the DSS was Colonel General Iulian Vlad.

²⁸ Almond, *The Rise and Fall...*, p. 228.

Unlike Postelnicu, Vlad was a career officer in the *Securitate*. He served as a captain in the cadres directorate in the late 1950s and gradually rose through the ranks, becoming Major General in 1977. On 9 May 1980, he was made State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior and promoted to Lieutenant General. On 15 April 1983, he became a deputy minister and on 21 August 1984, Colonel General. In the face of an increasing restiveness on the part of the population, amply demonstrated by the Brașov disturbances in November 1987, Ceaușescu ordered Postelnicu to improve the effectiveness of security forces, and to this end the Minister issued Order no. 02600 on 5 July 1988, approving 'Measures which must be taken by units of the Ministry of the Interior for increasing its combat and intervention effectiveness'.²⁹ It appears that in the wake of this order new special security units were set up in the major provincial cities under the authority of the *Securitate* to work alongside the USLA forces. The order was accompanied by a ban, issued by the Ministry, on the holding of wedding receptions and parties in restaurants to prevent the gathering of people in groups. In an interview given by Silviu Brucan and Nicolae Militaru on 23 August 1990, it was revealed that the special security force for Bucharest numbered 600 men and was placed under the command of Col. Gheorghe Goran, the head of the Bucharest DSS.³⁰ To these elite forces must be added the 484 men, commanded by Maj. Gen. Marin Neagoe, who constituted the Presidential Protection Group (Fifth Directorate). There were small units of USLA troops based at the provincial airports. The men of the Presidential Protection Group, the Bucharest security force and of USLA were all trained in the techniques of urban warfare and were equipped with modern automatic weapons with infra-red sights. According to Brucan, it was they who took up positions in accordance with a contingency plan drawn up in 1985 to combat a popular rising around strategic buildings such as the television and radio stations, the Ministry of Defence and the Central Committee building and who, on the evening of 22 December 1989, made a concerted sniper attack on the army and the population in the centre of Bucharest and at the television station which began at 7 p.m. Some of these

²⁹ Brucan, *Generația irosită*, p. 232.

³⁰ 'Adevărul, numai adevărul', *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990, p. 3.

officers held two identity cards and passports and keys to two flats stocked with food in freezers and civilian and military clothes. These specialist security units supplemented the Ministry of the Interior troops, the *trupele de securitate*, who at the time of the Revolution numbered 23,370 officers and men. Among the latter were the 2,000 officer cadets of the Ministry of the Interior military academy at Băneasa on the outskirts of Bucharest, commanded by Lieut. Gen. Nicolae Andrușă Ceaușescu.

Comprehensive details about the organisation of the *Securitate* on the eve of the Revolution and its duties, although not about its strength, were eventually published in the mass circulation daily *Evenimentul Zilei* in July 1993. The *Securitate's* direct subordination to Nicolae Ceaușescu was made clear in its programme of action, where it was charged with 'acting consistently to carry out to the letter the orders and indications of the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu'. Its objectives were to discover, anticipate and act to prevent and vigorously combat any deed likely to affect state security and national integrity, independence and security; to ensure the safety of the Supreme Commander and to carry out to the full all missions of an exceptional importance; and 'to prevent, counter and neutralise actions perpetrated by reactionary circles and nationalist, irredentist and Fascist groups abroad, by hostile *émigré* groups and by hostile elements in the country'. Special attention was to be paid to planting agents in 'Hungarian reactionary groups' and to undermining their activities as well as intercepting 'agents sent to Romania to gather information and stir up trouble'. The Directorates charged with these duties were the First, the Third and the CIE. Included in these hostile elements were 'the former bourgeois land-owning parties' and 'those formerly convicted of crimes against state security' as well as those who 'used the cover of religion to set up new sects, to incite native elements to anarchic deeds or to invoke false problems of a religious nature as a pretext for involvement in the internal affairs of the country'. Special attention was to be paid to the new-Protestant sects and the Greek Catholic Church.

Noteworthy in the definition of internal security under this third heading was the inclusion of defection or 'illegally remaining abroad', to use the official Romanian parlance, and to the 'illegal' crossing of the frontier. Information was to be gathered by the

first four directorates, USLA, the CIE and CIE counter-espionage 'to identify persons likely to remain abroad and to prevent their doing so'. The use of 'illegal' here requires clarification: it meant 'contrary to Romanian law' and not contrary to the law of a foreign country which might have been willing to grant asylum. To understand the importance attributed to such a role, it must be remembered that the award of a passport to a Romanian citizen was a privilege, not a right, and was, in the case of 'service' passports (i.e. issued for travel on official business) as opposed to 'tourist' passports, conditional upon the bearer fulfilling an extra task for an organ of the *Securitate*. Thus 'illegal' residence abroad and 'illegal' exit could be seen not solely as an infringement of an individual's freedom to travel but also as denial to the *Securitate* of control of a Romanian citizen. Passport control was effected by officers belonging to the Passport Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior who were trained in intelligence work, while the frontier guards were drawn from the frontier troops (*grăniceri*), who were placed under the Ministry of the Interior.

Under this programme, there was to be rigorous implementation of a plan, code-name 'Ether', to gather intelligence about news agencies and radio stations which carried material deemed to be hostile to Romania. This task was to be carried out by the CIE, by its counter-espionage unit and by the disinformation service of the DSS. A watch was to be placed on any relatives in Romania of staff at these agencies as well as upon those who had contacts with the staff in an effort to identify the authors of materials sent from Romania. The Romanian-language broadcasts of Radio Free Europe, the BCC, Voice of America, the West German *Deutsche Welle* and other foreign stations were monitored by special unit 'R', which regularly produced reports which were forwarded to Ceaușescu. Tracing those who listened to such broadcasts or contacted the stations was the work of the First Directorate.

Another remit of the *Securitate* was to identify and prevent acts of economic sabotage. Overall responsibility in this area was entrusted to the Second Directorate and to the Independent Service for Foreign Trade (*Serviciul Independent pentru Comerț Exterior* – SICE). Sabotage was given an extremely loose definition, being construed as a threat to the security of large factories, hydro-electric stations, the quality of exports and to 'the contentment of workers'.

Particular attention was paid to the need to guard against any event, either malfunctioning or industrial disputes, which could affect power stations. The nuclear energy programme, centred on the power plant at Cernavodă and the heavy-water plant at Turnu Severin, was accorded priority status and separate plans to guard them, code-named 'Energy' and 'Atom', were specifically devised. In averting sabotage in the defence industry, the Second Directorate was to be assisted by the Fourth Directorate and the Independent Service for Defending State Secrets of the *Securitate*.³¹

Economic security encompassed rail and maritime traffic, telecommunications, agriculture, food processing, the construction industry and scientific research. In all these areas, the Second Directorate was charged with preventing any disruption of production, be it intentional or otherwise. Yet the Directorate's remit did not end there; it was also to be a kind of economic 'think tank', expected to oversee the progress of scientific research and investment programmes, to isolate design faults and to report on unsound economic measures. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the Second Directorate became the best informed agency within Romania about the country's true economic plight; the fact that Elena Ceauşescu refused to allow the transmission of Maj. Gen. Emil Macri's resumé to her husband showed that she recognised where responsibility for that plight lay. It was not unusual for Macri during the last three years of the regime to arrange lunches with local DSS heads in rural locations at which he would vent his anger at the 'imbecility' of the President's economic programme and his frustration with Elena.³²

Counteracting foreign attempts to obtain the type of information gathered and passed on by Macri and his Second Directorate was the work of the Third Directorate. Economic links with other states formed the the subject of the measures code-named 'Atlas'. Under this programme, the Second Directorate and the counter-espionage unit of the CIE supervised the nature of contracts signed with foreign companies, the management of these contracts and the Romanian personnel sent abroad under their terms. Efforts were made to ensure that the oil-drilling and construction materials

³¹ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 17 July 1993, p. 3.

³² Private information.

sent to large projects in Iraq and Libya met the required standards and to verify the levels of Romanian workmanship.³³

Section Five in the programme of action was devoted to foreign trade. Insistence was placed upon the need to protect the details of import and export contracts; measures to ensure this were set out in a plan codenamed 'Mercury' and were to be taken by the Second, Third and Fourth Directorates, the Independent Service for Foreign Trade, the Independent Service for the Protection of State Secrets, the CIE and its counter-espionage unit. Industrial espionage was encouraged: 'action will be taken at all times to obtain data about advanced technologies...[and] to influence foreign firms and businessmen in adopting a favourable attitude towards developing relations with Romanian partners.'³⁴ This formed part of the CIE's work. All the units engaged in countering economic sabotage were called upon 'to assist the foreign trade company *Dunărea* in delivering on time goods contracted through it'.³⁵ *Dunărea* had been created as a separate enterprise of the CIE to sell Romanian arms and to 'launder' the money obtained.

Counter-espionage was the function of the Third Directorate. It was divided into sections which supervised foreign businessmen, tourists, diplomats, local staff employed at embassies and by foreign companies and Romanian citizens who came into contact with foreigners, including any relatives who lived abroad. Restrictions placed on the relations Romanians could have with foreigners were legalised under Law no. 23 of 1971 regarding the protection of state secrets and under Decree no. 408 of 1985, which made failing to report a conversation with a foreigner a criminal offence. This decree effectively reactivated a provision introduced in 1958 amidst the Draconian measures taken to reinforce internal security in the wake of the withdrawal of Soviet troops. Any contact with a foreigner had to be brought to the attention of the Party or the Ministry of the Interior and non-compliance constituted a 'digression from civic and Party conduct'.

Protection of state secrets in the ministries and in official institutions such as computer and research centres was the special

³³ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 20 July 1993, p. 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

responsibility of the Independent Service for the Protection of State Secrets of the *Securitate*. Heads of protocol in every ministry were required to co-operate fully with this unit in preventing any unauthorised release of information. It is easy to see that there was a potential for overlap in the enforcement of Decree no. 408 since most cases of its infringement were likely to involve a foreigner, the subject of attention of the Third Directorate, and a Romanian, whose action came within the remit of the Independent Service. Indeed, the experience of a friend of this author provided an example of this, although the two units concerned appear to have been the Second Directorate, responsible for gathering economic data and monitoring output, and the Independent Service. Summoned in 1986 to the local militia station, she was questioned by a plain-clothes officer about her contacts with this author's wife and her alleged failure to report them. She had in fact disclosed them to the officer (from the Second Directorate) attached to the computer factory where she worked in order to protect herself under the conditions of Decree 408 and told her interrogator (presumably from the Independent Service) as much. He instructed her to keep him posted of any further meetings with this author's wife. The friend duly reported her interrogation to the *Securitate* officer at her place of work, who uttered a curse and then told her not to accede to any further summonses to the militia but to inform him of them. She was never again bothered in this way.

An indication of the how wide a net of suspicion the Third Directorate was ordered to cast could be seen from the directive that 'radio hams and stamp collectors, as well as anyone belonging to associations with links abroad' should be watched for any signs of treacherous behaviour. Included in this category were Freemasons. The directorate was to take steps 'to gather better information about the present plans of the freemasons with regard to Romania and to ensure tighter control over those suspected of participating in Freemasonry activity abroad.'³⁶

Supervision of the staff of the Ministry of the Interior itself, including that of the *Securitate*, fell to the Fourth Directorate of Military Counter-espionage (it should be remembered that *Securitate* officers held military rank). Its role was 'to keep a per-

³⁶ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 26 July 1993, p. 3.

manent check' on officers and their families, as well as upon foreigners studying in military institutions.³⁷

The technical means of carrying out audio surveillance of all DSS targets was provided by special unit 'T', also known as *Tonola*. Officers from the unit not only placed microphones in homes and offices and telephone taps at exchanges but transcribed the information obtained and passed it on to the Directorate which had requested the eavesdropping. Another special unit 'S' intercepted mail and special unit 'R' ensured radio communication between the central directorates and the county inspectorates (departments). Unit 'R' also monitored the broadcasts of radio hams, who needed special permission from the *Securitate* to operate, and kept an ear open for clandestine radio traffic. Each county *Securitate* inspectorate had its own unit 'T' and 'S' units.

The maintenance of public order fell to the Command of the Security Troops (*Comandamentul Trupelor de Securitate*) and, as their name indicated, they came under the control of the DSS. Known popularly as the Ministry of the Interior Troops, their commander in December 1989 was Maj. Gen. Ghiță. They were made up of 23,370 officers and men. The 2,300 officers were career soldiers who underwent training at the Băneasa military school while the troops were conscripts who did their eighteen-month military service in the units of the command. Strict vetting procedures were adopted towards recruits and those who had a prison record, a parent with one, or relatives abroad were rejected. Only a small number of Hungarians were admitted. The role of the security troops was to ensure public order and to put down disturbances 'engineered by protest groups which could damage state security'.³⁸ Surprisingly, they were called upon to play a smaller part in crushing the December 1989 street protests in Timișoara and Bucharest than the army, although cadets from their academy in Băneasa under the command of Nicolae Andruța Ceaușescu were responsible for the deaths of several young protesters on the evening of 21 December.

The interview given by Brucan and Militaru in August 1990 provided skeletal details about the organisation of the *Securitate* and repeated details of alleged conspiracies to remove Ceaușescu

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 31 July 1993, p. 3.

that had appeared in the Romanian press earlier in the year. Since a major part of the conduct of human affairs is assessed by most Romanians in terms of conspiracy theories, it is as well that the accuracy and motives of those claiming to be participants in the plot should be questioned. Of course, conspiracy theories flourish in the absence of verifiable evidence and this is precisely what is lacking as regards the alleged conspiracy. Some of the so-called 'plotters' seem to have embroidered at will their role in an effort to establish stronger political credentials in the immediate post-Ceaușescu period; others appear to have an axe to grind because they feel abandoned by their erstwhile colleagues.

The first revelation about a plot came from Maj. Gen. Ștefan Kostyal. In a statement published in the weekly *Cuvîntul* on 28 February 1990, Kostyal, who had served as a deputy of the Higher Political Directorate of the Army, said that he received orders from Ceaușescu in 1970 to dismiss from the army all officers of the national minorities. Kostyal complained that Ceaușescu was using the invasion of Czechoslovakia as 'an excuse to remove from the head of the army specialists trained in the Soviet Union' and apparently protested, an action which led to his demotion to the rank of private. In a latter interview with the author Edward Behr, Kostyal said that his opposition to Ceaușescu was motivated by the growing personality cult and that he therefore decided, in concert with the former commander of the Romanian Navy Rear Adm. Nicolae Mihai, to address a letter to the Central Committee, protesting about it. As a result, Mihai was demoted and Kostyal sent into internal exile. He also stated that he was one of a number of senior officers who were retired from the army in 1970 because he had a Russian wife.³⁹ This confirms Pacepa's testimony about Ceaușescu sensitivity to Soviet influence in the higher echelons of the army and the security services after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Kostyal demanded a hearing before an army commission in 1971 and attacked Ceaușescu's 'erratic' (i.e. anti-Soviet) foreign policy. Kostyal's behaviour was written off in Party circles as the work of a Soviet agent and failed to rally any support. He was promptly taken off the army reserve, his pension stopped and he was sent to work as a labourer outside Bucharest. The protest of Kostyal

³⁹ Behr, *'Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite'*, pp. 220-1.

and Mihai seems to have formed the substance of this 'conspiracy' of 1970.

Kostyal recalled another conspiracy that emerged in 1984. Two groups which had been plotting independently to overthrow Ceaușescu merged. Once again, the Soviet connections of some of their members should not be overlooked. One group was formed by Gen. Ion Ioniță, Minister of Defence between 1966 and 1976, who, like Kostyal, was married to a Russian and who had been a colleague of Kostyal at the Voroshilov Military Academy in Moscow from 1956 to 1958. In 1976, Ioniță was appointed a Deputy Prime Minister and became a member of the Politburo. In March 1979, he lost his seat on the Defence Council and in the following November was demoted to alternate membership in the Politburo. He was dropped from the government and the Politburo in May 1982 and from the Central Committee in November 1984.⁴⁰ Ioniță's demotion embittered him towards Ceaușescu and he drew up plans for his military overthrow. He attracted to his group Janos Fazekas, a leading Hungarian member of the Party who was a Central Committee secretary from 1954 to 1961, a member of the Politburo from 1967 to 1974 and Minister of Domestic Trade from 1974 to 1982. Kostyal also joined this group. The second group had been formed around Col. Gen. Nicolae Militaru, the alleged Soviet spy who had been removed from his position as head of the Bucharest military garrison in 1978 and was to become Minister of Defence for a brief period after Ceaușescu's overthrow. It also included, Kostyal said, Ion Iliescu, the future President, and at the time an established member of the Communist Party *nomenklatura*.

The merger of the two groups in 1984, which also included Lieut. Col. Ion Suceava, promoted to Major General in January 1990, signalled a consolidation of their plans. A coup was planned for the summer, when Ceaușescu was due to visit West Germany, involving units from the Bucharest garrison but it was called off when the units concerned were sent to help with the harvest.⁴¹ This shows how unprofessional the whole plan was and how little support it commanded. Kostyal then went on to say that

⁴⁰ M. Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future by Revising the Past', *RFE Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 41 (12 October 1990), p. 32, note 10.

⁴¹ *Cuvântul*, no. 5, 28 February 1990.

the sequence of events in the Revolution of December 1989 followed a scenario drawn up by the conspirators in 1984. The conspirators had, in fact, two plans. The first proposed the occupation of the Ministry of National Defence, where it was hoped to find support amongst officers who were hostile to Ceauşescu and to the DSS because of 'the discriminatory measures that...favoured the apparatus of repression at the expense of the army',⁴² the seizure of the television centre and of the airfields. The second plan was to be applied in the event of a spontaneous uprising; it was essentially the same as the first and was applied almost down to the last detail, as Kostyal recounted:

It was not by chance that on 22 December some of the people connected with the line of action planned in 1984 went on television. I went to the Ministry of National Defence together with Lt. Gen. Victor Stănculescu and took the first measures for the application of the plan, being certain that [Ceauşescu's] special troops would not stand idle. At this time, Ion Iliescu and Nicolae Militaru went on television, after which they came to the Ministry of National Defence in order to take the first measures to do away with the political vacuum.⁴³

As Mircea Dinescu related to this author on 8 January 1990, the generals who came to the television centre at lunchtime on 22 December 1989 said to him that they were only prepared to back the uprising on conditions that 'serious politicians' took over and not a bunch of crazy poets and intellectuals. The generals were Mihai Chiţac, commander of the Bucharest garrison, Voinea and Tudor. None of these generals is mentioned as being members of one or other of the conspiratorial groups. To ascribe the overthrow of Ceauşescu to a conspiracy is thus wide of the mark. While the 1984 plot may well have provided a blueprint for some members of the group that seized power during the rising against Ceauşescu on 22 December, not all those who joined the National Salvation Front, set up on the same day, were a party to the plot.⁴⁴ Petre Roman, the future Prime Minister, was the prime example. By the same token, the argument that

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Quoted from Shafir, 'New Revelations', *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

the National Salvation Front had been set up some six months earlier needs to be treated with circumspection because a number of those who subsequently became its leading members could not have been a party to it, notably Silviu Brucan and Dumitru Mazilu, as they were both being held under house arrest at the time.

Indeed, new information about the plots and about their lack of professionalism surfaced in a number of interviews given by a naval captain, Nicolae Radu, who said that he had been persuaded to join an anti-Ceașescu conspiracy in 1970 by Virgil Măgureanu who, in March 1990, became head of the SRI, the security service which replaced the DSS.⁴⁵ There were, Radu asserted, no plans to remove the Communist Party from power; rather they sought merely to replace its leader with a more enlightened figure.⁴⁶ He was equally vague about who took the initiative to extend the group to include Ion Iliescu and senior army officers. He claimed that Iliescu was drawn to the group in 1971 because he was bitter at Ceașescu for demoting him and sending him to Timișoara as Party Propaganda Secretary. Together with Măgureanu, Iliescu represented what Radu called the *Securitate* wing of the conspiracy but who made the approach to Iliescu

⁴⁵ Măgureanu came from a humble background and details of his career, published in 1992, cast an interesting light on the workings of the *Securitate*. Born Virgil Asztalos in March 1941 in the county of Satu Mare at a time when it was under Hungarian rule (hence the Hungarian spelling of his father's name Astaliș), his secondary schooling was pursued in a textile apprentice school, where he was made Communist Youth Secretary. In 1964, he enrolled at the Faculty of Philosophy at Bucharest University and after graduating in 1969, was appointed Assistant Lecturer in political science at the Party academy 'Ștefan Gheorghiu' in Bucharest. It was at this time that he adopted his mother's maiden name, Măgureanu, to avoid the suspicion that he might be of Hungarian background. In the summer of 1971, he transferred to the Department of Scientific Socialism at the university and it was from here that he was recruited to work under cover in the DIE on 1 September 1972 with the rank of captain. He was given the conspiratorial name of Mihai Mihăilă and underwent three months of training before moving on to the documentation section. On 31 March 1973, he was placed on the reserve on the grounds of having been 'appointed to a civilian job'. He returned to the 'Ștefan Gheorghiu' Academy, presumably working under cover, since he had signed an official secrets document on 27 March 1973 pledging himself not to reveal anything about the DIE or his work there. 'Dosarul de securitate al domnului Măgureanu', *Tinerama*, no. 70 (27 March – 2 April 1992).

⁴⁶ 'Cine se ascunde în spatele morților noștri?', *NU*, no. 18 (1990).

is not clear. It was only eleven years later that Radu received orders (from whom is not specified) to recruit former Defence Minister Ioniță into the conspiracy. Radu discussed his approach with Măgureanu but Ioniță was unwilling to join at that date because he was already a suspect person. He had been dropped from membership of the Politburo in May 1982 for having opposed the rapid promotion in the army of the President's brother, Ilie Ceaușescu, for demanding an enquiry into the running of the psychiatric hospitals (which were subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior) and for objecting to the use of the army as manual labour on the President's vast construction projects.⁴⁷

In the following year, 1983, Radu was instructed to approach two other generals, Victor Stănculescu and Vasile Ionel. By a stroke of good fortune, Radu related, he met Ioniță only two days before he was due to see Stănculescu and when Radu asked him for his views on Stănculescu Ioniță is said to have replied: 'Don't you know he is Ceaușescu's man?' Radu recounted this to Măgureanu and both naturally took the proposal no further. Radu did contact Ionel but the latter did not follow up the invitation to join the group. He was more successful with a senior Party official, Vasile Patilineț, who was allegedly recruited in 1984 while serving as ambassador to Turkey. Patilineț had strong connections with the *Securitate*, being Central Committee Secretary for Military and Security Affairs from 1965 to 1972 and a member of the Defence Council from 1969 to 1972. According to Radu, Patilineț's task was to procure arms from abroad for a commando force to arrest Ceaușescu. As was well said, 'a conspiracy involving the military that has difficulty in getting hold of guns can hardly be taken very seriously'.⁴⁸

A military, as opposed to *Securitate*, wing of the conspiracy had been created in 1984 with the adherence of Gen. Nicolae Militaru to the conspiracy. He was joined by Gen. Ioniță, who appears to have changed his mind. Radu said that in May 1984 he tried to recruit Col. Dumitru Penciu, Chief of Staff of the Ministry of Interior troops, who declined the offer but later joined in 1987; it was also in 1984 that another colonel from the Ministry of the Interior, Pingulescu, joined. Radu did not indicate with

⁴⁷ 'Interview with Nicolae Radu', *Express Magazin*, no. 5 (August 1990).

⁴⁸ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', *op. cit.*, p. 32.

which wing of the conspiracy Pingulescu was associated but the distinction became academic when Radu, acting as the link man between the two wings, first brought them together in July 1984 in the house of one of Radu's friends. Present at the meeting were Iliescu, Măgureanu, Militaru and Ioniță. No concrete action against Ceașescu was discussed and Radu claimed that Iliescu limited himself to talking about the country's difficulties. From this point there was a reticence on the part of the *Securitate* wing towards the military group, which Radu alleges was the more constructive.⁴⁹ In 1986, an unsuccessful attempt was made to obtain twenty-one pistols from a military unit in Constanța and shortly afterwards, Patilineț was killed in a car accident with his son in Turkey on 9 October. Radu alleged that the accident was staged by the *Securitate* acting on Ceașescu's orders,⁵⁰ although he produced no supporting evidence; it was also to the *Securitate* that he attributed Ioniță's death from cancer on 24 July 1987.⁵¹

Suspensions that Radu's accounts of the conspiracies were grossly inflated and inaccurate were fuelled by his failure to mention the role of Gen. Kostyal and the coup planned for the summer of 1984 by a number of senior generals. Indeed, it was only after further details of the 1984 coup were given in the interview published in *Adevărul* (Truth) by Brucan and Militaru that Radu mentioned it in a letter to the editor of the weekly *Zig Zag*,⁵² claiming that he played a part in this attempt as well!⁵³

Any consideration of the details given about the anti-Ceașescu plots in the Brucan – Militaru interview must be set against the background of political events immediately following the December 1989 Revolution, for both interviewees played a significant part in them. As a comparison of the various accounts of the 'plots' and their ineffectiveness showed, it became clear that the importance of the plots and the plotters after the Revolution far outweighed their significance before it. Brucan himself, in an interview published in 17 July 1990 in *România liberă*, admitted that although a plot involving army officers and some *Securitate* officers had existed,

⁴⁹ 'Cine se ascunde în spatele morților noștri?', *NU*, no. 18 (1990).

⁵⁰ *NU*, no. 13 (1990).

⁵¹ *NU*, no. 20 (4–11 August 1990).

⁵² *Zig Zag*, no. 25 (28 August–3 September 1990).

⁵³ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', p. 32, note 12.

no serious support could be found among senior Communists and he expressed agreement with his interviewer that without the popular uprising of 21 and 22 December the plotters would have still been talking about 'how to get rid of Ceaușescu'. Brucan's reference to the failure to win support for the plot among senior Communists could also be seen as an attempt to undermine the credentials given to Iliescu by Radu as a leading figure in the anti-Ceaușescu conspiracy.

That attempt was continued in the Brucan-Militaru interview of 23 August and was part of a campaign by Brucan to discredit Iliescu into which Militaru had been drawn.⁵⁴ Both men had reason to be disgruntled after the Revolution: Brucan and Militaru were part of the small group which formed the core of the National Salvation Front in the Central Committee building on the evening of 22 December. Further, Brucan was a member of the NSF Executive Bureau. On 4 February, he resigned from the Bureau, basing his decision on his contention that a certain political stability had been established, but he stayed on the NSF Council. Even after his resignation, he was presented in the Romanian media as the *éminence grise* of the NSF yet it became clear that he was being marginalised by Iliescu, for, at the first national conference of the NSF in April 1990, he was not elected as an official. Militaru was appointed Minister of Defence after Ceaușescu's overthrow but was removed from this post on 17 February following protests to Prime Minister Roman from young officers and the General Staff that a large number of retired generals, including Militaru himself, had been re-activated. Equally damaging to Militaru were the accusations of serving the Soviet Union which had been publicised in Pacepa's *Red Horizons* and which made his position as Defence Minister untenable in the long run.⁵⁵

Much of the information about the plots given in the Brucan-Militaru interview repeated details given by Kostyal and Radu but some new claims were made which smacked, in the words of one analyst, of 'a new attempt at myth-making'.⁵⁶ Brucan alleged that opposition to Ceaușescu began from the very moment

⁵⁴ 'Adevărul, numai Adevărul', *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990.

⁵⁵ L. Watts, 'The Romanian Army in the December Revolution and Beyond' in *Romania After Tyranny*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992, p. 122, note 41.

⁵⁶ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', p. 30.

that he was elected Secretary General in 1965 and that the first nucleus of 'dissidence' was formed around generals Ioniță, Kostyal and Militaru. Brucan himself only came into contact with this group in 1983 through meetings with Ioniță. Militaru disclosed that a fourth general, Ion Gheorghe, who was Chief of the General Staff, joined the group in the 1970s. Both Ioniță and Gheorghe believed that they had the necessary means to organise a coup in the mid-1970s but Militaru considered that the conditions for a popular uprising were not ripe. On the other hand, these conditions changed in the 1980s with the severe austerity measures that were taken and Militaru, Ioniță and Kostyal decided to act. Militaru had noted the paralysis in the country at the time of the 1977 earthquake when the Ceaușescu were on a visit to Africa. This gave Militaru the idea of staging a coup while the couple were abroad and therefore the plotters tried to obtain advance notice of the Ceaușescu's travel plans. To obtain these, a contact in the Politburo was needed and several members were approached without success. The first of these, Brucan revealed in his interview in *România liberă* on 17 July, was Ștefan Andrei, Foreign Minister from 1978 to 1985, but he refused. Eventually, Militaru said, they succeeded with Ioan Ursu, 'who provided us with the programme of visits even several months in advance'.

In Militaru's words, the coup plan envisaged 'the capture and neutralisation of the Ceaușescu's nucleus in the party leadership', followed by the seizure of the radio and television stations, where an appeal would be launched for a popular uprising without which the military coup could not succeed. There was no mention of Kostyal's third arm to the plan which involved occupation of the Ministry of Defence and airfields. It was this part of the interview that sought to discredit Iliescu. When asked who was to replace Ceaușescu, Militaru replied that he and Ioniță had met with Iliescu and that they and Brucan considered him the most suitable person. However, Militaru added, there was no plan to 'change the political order', i.e. to remove the Communist Party from power:

As regards Mr Iliescu, I do not believe that such a thought had occurred to him either. In fact, I noticed his reluctance to take any action outside the system, a fact which persuaded us to disregard him, at least in respect of what we had planned. Later, in more recent years, he showed that he had nothing

in common with Communist dogmas, and emphasised the need for total change of the system.⁵⁷

Militaru's words were potentially very damaging to Iliescu. On the one hand, they confirmed the view of Iliescu as a one-time committed Communist and on the other they stripped him of any part in the anti-Ceaușescu conspiracy.⁵⁸

The date fixed for the coup was 'between 15 and 17 October 1984', when Ceaușescu was due to be on a state visit to West Germany. The principal army unit involved was based in Bucharest and access to a munitions dump in the town of Tîrgoviște had been secured by Lieut. Col. Ion Suceavă. However, just as Kostyal had explained, the coup had to be aborted when the army unit on which they were counting was sent to harvest maize. In Militaru's view, this move was no accident but was the result of betrayal. Proof of this was the arrest of Kostyal and his confinement to a house in Curtea de Argeș and the interrogation of Militaru and Ioniță in the Central Committee building by Politburo member Emil Bobu and the head of the DSS, Tudor Postelnicu. From the questions put to them, both generals realised that Bobu and Postelnicu knew little about their plan and they were let off with a warning not to see each other. In an English version of the Brucan – Militaru interview, Militaru named the two traitors as Generals Gomoiu and Popa.⁵⁹

When asked about his overall view of the role played in the 1989 Revolution by the 'dissidents' in the Party, army and the *Securitate*, Militaru argued that the conspirators had been more successful in creating a breach in the two latter bodies than in the Party. Apart from the courageous stand taken by Constantin Pîrvulescu at the Twelfth Party Congress in 199 and Virgil Trofin's criticism in the Central Committee plenum in November 1981 of the ill-considered investments authorised by Ceaușescu at Jiu Valley, it was only after 1985 that Party unity had been shaken. Militaru cited Brucan's declaration to foreign press correspondents following the demonstrations in Brașov on 15 November 1987

⁵⁷ 'Adevărul, numai Adevărul', *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990.

⁵⁸ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', p. 39.

⁵⁹ 'Was there a Coup', *East European Reporter*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Autumn/Winter 1990), p. 75. Although claiming to be an approved translation of the Brucan-Militaru interview, this text amputates some the answers given and expands others.

and the letter of the six senior Communists in March 1989, both of which had dealt a serious blow to Ceaușescu's standing in both the Party and the county, but neither had succeeded in breaking Party unity. In the army, on the other hand, the position was different.

Brucan said that, as a result of the efforts of Generals Ioniță, Militaru and Kostyal, and of Navy Captain Nicolae Radu and others, a Military Resistance Committee was set up in 1989 that consisted of almost twenty generals and numerous other officers. Plans had been made for Gen. Dumitru Pletos to take over the command of a mechanised division, and for Gen. Paul Cheler to take over that of a tank division. The Committee also had a whole network of senior officers in the major urban centres and in the air force and navy. Although some units under the command of officers loyal to Ceaușescu fired on the people who took to the streets in Timișoara in December 1989, after Militaru took over the Ministry of Defence on 22 December, the command of major army units was given to members of the Resistance Committee. It was only then that the revolutionaries could truly say, affirmed Brucan, 'The army is with us'. It was completely wrong to suggest that this 180 degree turn on the part of the army was spontaneous and whoever believed that did not understand the meaning of what Brucan called 'a military structure consolidated over two decades'. This dissident activity on the part of military played a decisive role in preventing a bloody massacre throughout the country.⁶⁰

Yet the events of the Revolution demonstrated quite the contrary view and cast heavy doubt on Brucan's affirmations. Army units had fired on demonstrators not only in Timișoara but in Bucharest and Cluj as well. Clearly, this showed the failure of the Military Resistance Committee's plans, if they existed at all.⁶¹ Moreover, Brucan's claim that the Committee had set up a network within the army and prepared the about-turn of 22 December was probably a gross exaggeration. The twenty generals were nearly all on the retired list in December 1989 and must have had little authority. Militaru, Pletos and Cheler were also in retirement and no senior serving officer has been named as a member of the Committee.

⁶⁰ *Adevărul*, numai *Adevărul*, *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990.

⁶¹ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', p. 34.

Ironically, it was Ceaușescu's own Defence Minister Vasile Milea, who was not part of the alleged conspiracy, who was the first senior officer to disobey the dictator by refusing to instruct the army to fire on the crowds around the Central Committee building on the morning of 22 December. Immediately afterwards, he committed suicide.

Most damaging to the conspiracy claims of Brucan and Militaru was the revelation of details from the army itself of the part played by some of its units in events in Bucharest on 21 and 22 December. This was the subject of an investigation made by the military procurator's office in March 1990. The report, drawn up by Capt. Cornel Iordache, provided an interim assessment of the army's role and recommended an extension of the investigation, but according to Mirel Curea, a journalist on the staff of *Evenimentul Zilei*, no follow-up action was taken and it was only in July 1993 that the report's conclusions were made public.⁶² The details that emerged showed an army command that remained faithful to Ceaușescu until the moment of Defence Minister Vasile Milea's death at about 10.40 a.m. on 22 December, thereby undermining any claims about the efficacy of an anti-Ceaușescu plot. Iordache began his investigations with the 1st Armoured Division since this provided the bulk of the army forces which took part in the quelling of the demonstrations on 21 December. This division was part of the First Army under the command of Maj. Gen. Gheorghe Voinea and was made up of two regiments, the 1st Mechanised, based in the Antiaeriană district of the capital, and the 2nd Mechanised, garrisoned on the Oltenița road. The orders received by the regiment were transmitted by the First Army command, which in turn received them from the Ministry of Defence, with the exception of those orders given directly to forces in the field by the Minister of Defence, General Vasile Milea.

At 3.25 p.m. on 17 December, the First Army command ordered the 1st Armoured Division to implement the plan '*Radu Cel Frumos*' (Radu the Handsome), the code word for actions of a limited nature.⁶³ According to the Defence Ministry's General Order no.

⁶² *Evenimentul Zilei*, 6 July 1993, p. 3. The details for 17-21 December are taken from Iordache's report.

⁶³ The choice of the name was significant since Radu was the Turkish-backed Prince who drove the 'independent' Vlad the Impaler (a Ceaușescu favourite) from

0048 of 13 October 1988, actions of a limited nature 'were designed to crush foreign aggression and to defend the country's revolutionary achievements and territorial integrity'. There was no mention in them of a role to be played by the army in maintaining public order in peacetime. Moreover, Capt. Iordache established in discussions with a number of officers that there had never been concerted actions with Ministry of Interior forces in order to put down anti-government demonstrations. One might question this statement since army units were certainly used alongside the militia during the riots in Brașov in November 1987 in order to patrol the streets.

In the period 17-20 December, no information was given to the troops about the reasons behind the orders to implement the *Radu Cel Frumos* plan. On the other hand, rumours abounded that in Timișoara bands of hooligans had ransacked shops and attacked soldiers, killing a number of tank crews. This latter rumour must have had a considerable psychological impact on troops from an armoured regiment. On 18 December, an order came from the Army Upper Political Council for personal radios to be removed from the troops, while at 9 a.m. on 20 December, the order went out for wives and relatives not to come to the barracks. At 3.30 a.m. on 21 December, the Political Council of the First Army gave the order for political assemblies to be held in its units and at such a meeting of the 1st Mechanised regiment, its commander, Col. Florea-Marin Oană, railed against the 'hooligans' in Timișoara. At midday, the officers and men went to the television room to watch the meeting organised by Ceașescu in front of the Central Committee building.

Fifty minutes later, General Voinea ordered all units of the First Army to form into columns and ammunition to be distributed. At 1.38 and 1.45 p.m. orders were received for the 1st and 2nd regiments respectively to take up positions close to the Central Committee building. The first columns went into the city centre under the command of Col. Oană and Maj. Ionel Marin. They consisted of armoured cars but not tanks and by 7.45 p.m. twenty-four cars from the 1st regiment and thirteen from the 2nd had taken up positions. From the statements made by the two regimental commanders to Captain Iordache, their mission was

the seat of Wallachia in 1462.

to block off the roads leading to the Central Committee building and, if necessary, to fire warning shots into the air but under no circumstances were they to fire on the population. However, according to another witness, Constantin Dobre, who was a counter-espionage officer with the 1st Mechanised regiment, Defence Minister Milea gave order in his presence to Colonel Oană to fire if necessary at demonstrators' legs. But such an order was not given to the troops; and in any case, Iordache added, if the troops had fired on the population, there would have been a veritable massacre. As it was, according to a Major Ion Guzu, 'only about thirty people were shot dead'.

The 2nd Mechanised regiment took up positions on Bulevardul Magheru with one column at the Scala cinema and another drawn across the road from the Sala Dalles to the intersection with 13 December Street. The 1st Mechanised regiment stationed itself outside the Central Committee building and in the streets that fanned out from the square in front of it, such as Oneşti Street and Calea Victoriei. Cordons of troops and armoured cars were set up on several streets, such as that in the area of Sala Dallas and the Intercontinental Hotel, where in fact several protesters were shot dead. The cordon was made up of two lines of Ministry of Interior Troops carrying shields, a third line of militia troops and a row of armoured cars, between which were placed Ministry of Interior troops and cadets from the Ministry of the Interior Academy at Băneasa. Behind the cars were infantry troops from the 98th Guard battalion under the command of Col. Amariucăi, which formed part of the Infantry and Tank Command of Gen. Ion Hortopan. In addition, many witnesses reported the presence of groups of men in plain clothes who were probably from sections of the *Securitate*.

After 8.00 p.m. a barricade made up of tables and chairs from the *Dunărea* restaurant was erected in front of the Intercontinental Hotel by the demonstrators. It is ironic to think that many of these young demonstrators would not have been present but for the impact of Ceauşescu's decree of 1966 outlawing abortion, and that, in a sense, he was to be overthrown by the generation he himself created. Later in the evening, Lorries were brought up to reinforce the barricade and were set on fire. Armoured cars from the 2nd Mechanised Regiment were used to break down the barricade but without success. Moreover, about 11

p.m. an armoured car (no. 3 E-225) under the command of Lieut. Nicu Șerban was set on fire. Its crew managed to get out. At 10.50 p.m. Col. Pîrcălăbescu conveyed Defence Minister Milea's order to the First Army Command that a company of eight tanks from the 1st Mechanised regiment should go to the Intercontinental Hotel. The order was passed on to Maj. Valentin Roșca, the tank battalion commander of the 1st regiment. The latter took five tanks up to the barricade by the hotel in front of traffic island in University Square. It was burning and the demonstrators had retreated from it after tear gas had been used against them. A tipper truck had in the meantime been moved up behind the barricade and four of the tanks moved slowly forward to demolish it. At the same time, the various troops who had taken up position by Sala Dalles (MI troops, cadets from the Băneasa academy, soldiers from the 98th guard battalion) fired warning shots and advanced behind the tanks. The demonstrators fled down Bulevardul 1848 to Piața Unirii (Union Square) while the tanks regrouped, two of them under Maj. Roșca's command turning into Bulevardul Republicii and stopping outside the Ministry of Agriculture. They were joined later by two other tanks, together with men from the 98th battalion.

Another three tanks under Col. Marin Oană carried on down past Union Square to the Budapest restaurant on Bulevardul Dimitrie Cantemir where they dislodged another barricade made up of metal containers and a lorry. One of the tanks directed machine-gun fire on the lorry to extinguish its lights and when checked, no one was found inside it. About 2 a.m. on 22 December, three armoured cars and an artillery unit under Capt. Cristian Călinescu were brought up on Col. Oană's orders but according to Captain Iordache's report, there were no further incidents that night. At 9 a.m. however, huge columns of well-organised workers converged on the city centre and stopped at the cordons of troops where they tried to persuade them not to suppress the anti-Ceaușescu protests. It was, however, news of Defence Minister Milea's death which became public about 11 a.m. that led to a spontaneous decision by units of the 1st Armoured Division to return to their barracks. By 11.03 a.m. Col. Oană's men were thus back in their regimental base. At the same time and quite independently, Col. Gheorghe Carp, the division's commander,

had decided in concert with fellow officers to pull back his men without orders from above.

At this point, Captain Iordache was at pains to stress the following details entered in the operational record. At 9.54 Gen. Eftimescu at the Defence Ministry sent an order to the First Army Command instructing 'all units to obey only the commander-in chief's [i.e. Ceauşescu's] orders'. But at 10.07 a radio message bearing the Defence Minister's code-name 'Rondo' was sent to the First Army and to the 1st Armoured Division ordering them not to fire at anyone. This second message effectively negated the first and reinforced the resolve of the commanders of the 1st Armoured Division to take their men back to barracks. This unilateral decision of the divisional officers was confirmed by the receipt later of orders calling for the return of the armour to its previous positions, orders which were not obeyed. Thus at 11.24 Col. Buliga of the First Army Command conveyed Gen. Voinea's order that all armoured cars should withdraw *to* the front of the Central Committee building; the order was repeated six minutes later. At 11.38 Gen. Constantinescu also gave an order that armoured cars should regroup in this same place. They did not. In fact, the withdrawal of armoured cars and troops *from* in front of the Central Committee building just minutes before Ceauşescu's flight from it was the signal for the demonstrators to enter the building.

Iordache's report contradicts an assertion made by Lieut. Gen. Victor Stănculescu, one of Milea's deputies. Having waited for the Ceauşescus to flee the Central Committee building, Stănculescu said that he had given the order for the units guarding it to withdraw.⁶⁴ Brucan alleged that it was Militaru who gave such an order to those units guarding both the Central Committee and the State Council (the former Royal Palace) buildings opposite.⁶⁵ While the source of this command remains unclear and it may indeed have been a spontaneous decision by the commanders of the 1st Armoured Division as Iordache reported, one fact is reasonably clear: General Militaru, alone among the generals linked to a conspiracy, played a crucial role in the events of the Revolution but only after the Ceauşescus' flight.

⁶⁴ Interview with General V. Stănculescu, 6 January 1990.

⁶⁵ 'Adevărul, numai Adevărul', *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990.

It was precisely the authority which Militaru was able to exercise as a member of the inner circle of the embryonic National Salvation Front, set up in the Central Committee building on 22 December, and as the first Minister of Defence after Ceașescu's overthrow, that enabled him to recommend the recall to active duty of a number of the retired officers, some of whom were presumably on the so-called Military Resistance Committee.⁶⁶ The most senior position, apart from Militaru's, was given to Gen. Ionel, who became Chief of the General Staff. Militaru himself was promoted to the rank of General of the Army. At the same time, a number of senior officers who had joined the Revolution after Ceașescu's flight were also rewarded, most notably Stănculescu, who was raised to the rank of Colonel Gen. Gheorghe Voinea and Mihai Chișac, the first generals to declare their allegiance to the Revolution on Romanian television, were promoted respectively to the ranks of Lieutenant General and Colonel General.

The interviewer of Brucan and Militaru found the explanation given by Brucan of the army's role in the revolution 'clear' and yet to many it must have seemed as ambiguous as the part played by the *Securitate*. The *Securitate* was, in Militaru's words, the third pillar of Ceașescu's power; a breach had been made but it was not as effective as that made in the army. When talking about the *Securitate*, Militaru explained, a distinction had to be made between its three components: the 25,000-strong troops of the Ministry of the Interior, the USLA anti-terrorist brigade and the 'repressive apparatus' proper, i.e. the Department of State Security. The plotters' strategy had been directed towards the commanding officers of the Ministry of Interior troops and here they had 'almost complete success'. Militaru had obtained the collaboration of Col. Dumitru Penciu, the Chief of Staff of the MI troops, and through him, links were established with the commanders of these forces. As a result, these forces sided with the Revolution on 22 December. Penciu, who after the Revolution was promoted to the rank of Major General and for a month served as commander of the MI troops before being moved to the General Inspectorate of

⁶⁶ They were Col. Gen. Vasile Ionel, Lieut. Gen. Paul Cheler, Lieut. Gen. Jean Moldoveanu, Maj. Generals Marin Bălțeanu, Ion Bordei, Liviu Ciubancan, Horia Opruță, Dumitru Pletos and Gheorghe Popescu and Rear-Adm. Nicolae Hirjeu. Bălțeanu and Pletos were promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General. *România liberă*, 29 December 1989.

Police, was also mentioned by Radu, who was under instructions to recruit him into the conspiracy in 1984. At that time, Penciu did not join but he changed his mind three years later.⁶⁷ The impression is given in the Brucan-Militaru interview that Ministry of the Interior troops were guarding the Central Committee and State Council buildings on the morning of 22 December and that Militaru ordered their commanders to withdraw them, thus leaving them open to occupation by the crowds in the Palace Square.

Yet here again the claims of the plotters appear inflated. There is no evidence to suggest that any units of the MI troops switched sides before Ceaușescu's flight; in fact, quite the contrary is demonstrated by the evidence of the repression in Bucharest on the evening of 21 December, only hours after Ceaușescu's address to the crowd in the square in front of the Central Committee building. A sketch outlining the position of forces deployed that evening in the centre of the city was published in *Evenimentul Zilei* on 5 July 1993. It revealed that these forces were composed of an assortment of units drawn from the army, the Ministry of Interior troops, the troops of the militia (*Forțele de Ordine Internă* – Forces for Internal Order (FOI)) and the Patriotic Guards, a part-time workers' militia whose formation had been proclaimed by Ceaușescu on 21 August 1968, the day of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, and officially decreed two weeks later. The army component was made up of several tanks and armoured cars from the 1st and 2nd Mechanised regiments of the First Army, based in Bucharest. The armour was used to back up platoons of MI troops, cadets from the MI academy at Băneasa, cadets from the military academy in Bucharest, shield-bearing troops from the militia (*scutieri*), soldiers from the 98th Guard Battalion, as well as USLA troops in plain clothes.⁶⁸

The participation of not just MI forces but also militia troops under the command of Colonel Vasile Popa (deputy head of the Bucharest police in 1993) in confronting the demonstrators in University Square on the evening of 21 December 1989,⁶⁹ demonstrated how thin Militaru's contention of 'almost complete

⁶⁷ 'Cine se ascunde în spatele morților noștri?', *NU*, no. 18, 1990.

⁶⁸ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 16 June 1993, p. 3; 5 July 1993, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 14 July 1993, p. 3.

success' in making a breach in the command of the MI troops and other security forces before the Revolution was. The importance of securing the cooperation of Colonel Gheorghe Ardeleanu and the USLA anti-terrorist brigade under his command was highlighted by his presence alongside Iliescu, Brucan, Militaru and Roman in the Central Committee building in the late afternoon of 22 December when the National Salvation Front was established.⁷⁰ Indeed, doubts about Ardeleanu's allegiance to the new order seemed to account for his dismissal from his command in early January 1990 under suspicion of having ordered his deputy, Lt. Col. Gheorghe Troșca, to mount an attack on the Ministry of Defence on the morning of 24 December 1989 when the key figures of the NSF and army were gathered there. Evidence produced later suggested otherwise: in an attempt to cover up an attempted pro-Ceaușescu counter-revolution by some army commanders, the story was put about that morning that a group of 'terrorists' using armoured vehicles had attacked the Ministry of Defence. A host of reporters made their way to the scene and relayed television pictures showing two armoured cars riddled with bullets and seven bodies, one of which had been partially burned. The new authorities confirmed that the bodies were those of USLA soldiers and for five days they were left in the street.

Later, further details emerged. There were, in fact, five survivors amongst the USLA unit who stated that it had been ordered by General Militaru, through Colonel Ardeleanu, to help the army remove some 'terrorists' who were attacking the ministry building. Their declarations were confirmed in January 1993 with the publication of the radio conversation between the USLA command and Troșca, which showed that, far from being ordered to attack the Ministry of Defence, the USLA unit had been called in to 'neutralise terrorists who had wormed their way into the buildings surrounding the Ministry'.⁷¹ Troșca selected the men for the mission and led them in three armoured personnel carriers (APCs). En route, one of the vehicles broke down but the other two continued. Over the radio, Lieut. Col. Ion Bliort, Ardeleanu's second deputy, passed on the order to Troșca to pick up the

⁷⁰ Shafir, 'Preparing for the Future', p. 36.

⁷¹ Ion Itu, 'Armata Trage în Propriul Minister', *Tinerama*, no. 110 (8-14 January 1993).

representative of the National Salvation Front, Constantin Isac, who had been delegated by the NSF to coordinate the USLA mission with the army units surrounding the Ministry. The two USLA armoured personnel carriers were to wait behind the last tank, awaiting details from the army command as to the positions of the 'terrorists'.⁷²

When Trosca took up this position he informed Bliorț and added what was to prove a very significant detail: his two USLA APCs were parked with their rear towards the Ministry and facing the buildings from where the terrorists were believed to have fired. After a few minutes, one of the army tanks fired a burst of machine-gun fire at Trosca's APC. Two of the USLA men, Sergeant Majors Teodor Neagoe and Ion Costache, were wounded. Trosca asked Bliorț to tell the army not to fire on them and that he had two wounded. A minute later, he was told that an ambulance would come and that the tank would flash its lights three times and that he should return the signal in order to identify himself. The tank signalled and Trosca's APC responded. The tank then opened fire with its heavy machine-gun, first on Trosca's APC and then on the second one commanded by Capt. Eugen Cotună. At the same time, the tank moved forward and struck the first APC, crushing under its tracks senior warrant officer Ion Muicaru who was trying to take shelter. Three of the other men managed to gain the refuge of a block of flats where they were picked up by soldiers the following day, having telephoned their HQ to say where they were. Despite this, they were placed under arrest as 'terrorists'. Another survivor remained gravely wounded in the first APC, together with his two dead colleagues.

Although wounded in both legs, Constantin Isac managed to get away. He returned to the scene the next day at first light and was astonished to find the two personnel carriers now facing the Ministry, suggesting that they were in an attacking position, while the dead men, including those who perished inside the APCs, were strewn on the pavement. Seven USLA men were killed: Lieut. Col. Trosca, Capt. Eugen Cotună, Senior Warrant Officers Ion Muicaru and Emil Oprea, and Sergeant Majors Teodor Neagoe, Ion Costache and Constantin Surpățeanu.⁷³ In the opinion

⁷² *Ibid.*

of Ioan Itu, a former army officer and now an investigative journalist, the above evidence shows that on 24 December, some army units attacked their own Ministry. These units belonged to the Second Army, based in Buzău, which had been summoned to the capital. To support his case, Itu pointed out that on the morning of 24 December Admiral Cico Dumitrescu broadcast an order on television to units in Focșani, Râmnicu Sărat, Buzău, Brăila and Galați to send forces to the capital to defend the Ministry of Defence, the television centre and the telephone exchanges. The order was signed by Generals Gușe and Stănculescu. All these units formed part of the Second Army and the question raised by Itu was: why wasn't this order addressed to its commander? Perhaps, as Itu surmised, the commander had refused to carry out the orders given by Gușe and Stănculescu, hence the direct appeal to units under his nominal command. What orders, furthermore, had the Second Army commander given to his units surrounding the Ministry of Defence on 24 December 1989? These might explain the attack on the building by what was believed to be the Buzău unit mentioned by Trosca. And there may well be a connection between the attitude of the Second Army commander and the presence at the Buzău military HQ of former Defence Minister and Politburo member, Col. Gen. Constantin Olteanu. In any case, one thing is certain about this incident: the army command at the Ministry of Defence was in contact with the USLA command and the USLA unit was fired upon after it had identified itself and not as a result of confusion and misunderstanding. There the matter rests, for the moment.

Ardeleanu's other deputy, Lieut. Col. Ion Bliorț, was retired after this incident. But because of the unanswered questions about it, some were inclined to believe a suspicious hand lay behind Ardeleanu's death at the age of fifty-five on 15 June 1993. According to doctors, death resulted from inhalation of toxic fumes from an anti-Colorado beetle repellent which Ardeleanu was spraying in his garden in the town of Ștei (formerly Dr Petru Groza) near Oradea. When asked for his reaction to the death, Militaru himself declared:

Gheorghe Ardeleanu and Iulian Vlad are the only people who

⁷³ 'Intercontinental 21/22', *România liberă*, 17 March 1990.

could reply to everything that happened in December 1989. I regret that with his departure very many replies about those December events have gone to the grave with him. Someone, probably, was counting on this because at some stage Colonel Ardeleanu might have spoken. I knew Ardeleanu and I do not think he was so stupid as not to realise that that substance was poisonous. In 1990, I met him by chance with his family and he told me that he was under permanent surveillance and that at some future date we would meet to discuss a number of things in more detail. Ardeleanu's death ought to be a warning signal for Iulian Vlad.⁷⁴

Like Ardeleanu, Col. General Iulian Vlad, the head of the *Securitate*, had adopted an ambiguous stance towards the Revolution. He made a radio broadcast on the afternoon of 23 December from the Ministry of Defence in which he pointed out that Ministry of the Interior troops were 'fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Romanian army for the survival of the national being of the Romanian people'.⁷⁵ He did not, however, call upon them to cease fighting and to lay down their arms, as he had been requested to do so by Silviu Brucan. Brucan, suspecting Vlad's loyalty, secured the agreement of Iliescu and Militaru for a meeting that evening to test Vlad. At the meeting, Brucan challenged the DSS chief about his failure to order his men to lay down their arms. Vlad gave an indignant reply that this was the first time that his loyalty to the Revolution had been questioned. Brucan then asked him about the *Securitate*'s contingency plans in case of a revolt against the regime. Why had not these been revealed to the army? Vlad denied the existence of such a plan. Pressed further, he claimed that even if such a plan existed, he knew nothing of it. Vlad pointed out that some Ministry of the Interior units (the so-called *Forțele de Ordine Internă*) were under the direct command of Tudor Postelnicu, the Minister of the Interior, and asked that he be given twenty-four hours to draw up a plan for the capture of *Securitate* forces under his control. When Vlad failed to deliver, he was arrested the following day.⁷⁶

A third key commander upon whom the NSF could not count

⁷⁴ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 16 June 1993.

⁷⁵ Radio Bucharest, 23 December 1989, 4.35 p.m.

⁷⁶ Brucan, *Generația Irosită*, pp. 224-5.

was Maj. Gen. Ștefan Gușe, Ceașescu's Chief of the General Staff and a deputy defence minister. Although he was named a member of the NSF Council when it was set up on 22 December, Brucan doubted his commitment to the Revolution. On 28 December, Gușe was dismissed by the Council for, as Iliescu told a news conference the following day, 'mistakes inadmissible for a military commander' which were made in the defence of the Central Committee building against pro-Ceașescu forces.⁷⁷

Precision was not a strong point with Brucan and Militaru. Neither of them ever mentioned that the armed troops of the militia, the *Forțele de Ordine Internă*, came under the command not of the *Securitate* but of the General Inspectorate of the Militia, whose head was Maj. Gen. Constantin Nuță. The militia itself was subordinated to the Ministry of the Interior and it is possibly their troops that Brucan had in mind when referring to the special security force for Bucharest numbering 600 men led by Col. Gheorghe Goran.

From the evidence presently available, it is likely that the USLA troops and some Fifth Directorate officers were the 'terrorists' about whom so much was written in the Romanian and foreign media after 22 December. Many of them, Brucan stated, had been captured by the army or by civilians and others simply went home after seeing the film of the Ceașescus' execution on the television. Those who were captured were all released within a few days. Some of them then fled abroad, together with DSS officers. When asked about the involvement of foreign terrorists, Brucan alleged that 'some thirty foreigners, most of them Palestinians who were being trained at the Băneasa military academy and other *Securitate* centres', had assisted the Romanian 'terrorists'. A number of them had been killed or wounded and their bodies had disappeared from the morgues or, after being treated for wounds in hospital, they had been flown out of the country. No reliable evidence was ever produced of foreign terrorist participation in the Revolution and the photographed bodies of 'Arab' terrorists shown to foreign press correspondents at the time could equally well have been of swarthy Romanians. Nevertheless, 'unconfirmed but very reliable military and governmental sources'

⁷⁷ M. Shafir, 'The Revolution: An Initial Assessment', *RFE Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 1, no. 4 (26 January 1990), p. 40.

interviewed by Radio Free Europe said that 'shortly after the capture of Palestinians, Libyans and other Arabs who had fought on the side of the pro-Ceausescu forces, [the Libyan leader] Qadhafi had threatened to kill all Romanian specialists in Libya if the Arabs were not allowed to leave Romania.'⁷⁸

Once again, Brucan's affirmation simply could not be proved. The question of foreign involvement was extended in the Brucan-Militaru interview to press reports alleging that foreign governments and intelligence services had played a part in the Revolution.⁷⁹ In reply, Militaru returned to the military coup which he had planned with Ioniță, Radu and Kostyal. For the coup, they needed 'special silencer pistols with cartridges which put the victim immediately to sleep for some twenty-four hours'. Militaru approached a Soviet diplomat in Bucharest for help and later visited the Soviet consulate in Constanța but 'the answer from Moscow was a categorical "no", forbidding Soviet diplomats to interfere in any way in Romanian internal affairs'.⁸⁰ Militaru and his colleagues then tried to obtain the pistols through Patilineț, an endeavour which failed because they lacked the necessary dollars to pay for them. As Militaru's interviewer pointed out, Nicolae Radu had already talked about the meeting in Constanța but the interviewer overlooked an inconsistency between the two accounts: Patilineț died in 1986 while the Militaru meeting in Constanța was related by Radu to have taken place in 1987.⁸¹ That said, Brucan confirmed the same reluctance on the part of Moscow to get involved in Romania's domestic affairs when he talked briefly about his visit to the Soviet capital in November 1988. Although he was received in the Kremlin, the only undertaking given there was to 'watch out for my own personal security' and to that end *Pravda's* correspondent in Bucharest, Stanislav Petuhov, was told 'to visit me regularly, thus signalling to the Romanian authorities the Soviets' interest in me'.

A somewhat different account was given later by Brucan about his Moscow visit. In his memoirs published in 1992, he said

⁷⁸ Shafir, 'The Revolution', p. 37, note 35.

⁷⁹ Theories about Soviet military intervention are convincingly debunked by Shafir, 'The Revolution', p. 38.

⁸⁰ 'Adevărul, numai Adevărul', *Adevărul*, 23 August 1990.

⁸¹ *NU*, no. 20 (4-11 August 1990).

that he had met Gorbachev for almost an hour and discussed three subjects: political reform in the Soviet Union; the position of the Baltic republics; and Ceaușescu's overthrow. It was the Soviet leader who opened the discussion on the latter issue and 'declared that he agreed with the move to overthrow Ceaușescu on condition that it was conceived and carried out in such a way as to leave the Communist Party as the leading political force in Romania'. Gorbachev was adamant on this point, insisting that 'the Party must remain on its feet, otherwise there will be chaos'. At the same time, he made it quite clear that he would not involve himself in Romania's internal affairs: 'For me, non-intervention is a sacred principle.'⁸²

Yet shortly after the Revolution, Brucan denied that there had ever been a plot because 'under Ceaușescu's police state...surveillance was so effective that no [conspiratorial] party or group could take shape'.⁸³ This was indeed the view that Brucan confided to this author in an informal meeting on 13 November 1988 during his visit to London. It did, therefore, seem that Brucan was using his interview of 23 August 1990 to give himself new, revolutionary credentials after his relegation to the side-lines by the National Salvation Front, while at the same time seeking, with Militaru, to undermine Iliescu.

Iliescu was not slow to respond to the Brucan-Militaru version of the conspiracy. On 28 August, *Adevărul* carried on its front page a statement by him on their interview in which he prefaced his remarks with the observation that all accounts of the past were marked by their subjectivity. However, the Brucan-Militaru account was marked by 'an exaggerated subjectivity bordering on egocentricity. Reading it, one might believe that the two were at the centre of all events prior to and during the people's revolution.' In fact, there were 'numerous attempts to find solutions and change the system, as well as stands taken, individual and collective protests and disapproval of the regime'. When talking of conspiracy, one should talk rather of 'a whole multitude of conspiracies'. Agreeing with Brucan's assertion that dissidence against Ceaușescu started from the very moment that the former dictator came to power, Iliescu brazenly sought to place himself

⁸² Brucan, *Generația Irosită*, p. 188.

⁸³ Shafir, 'The Revolution', p. 39.

in this posture by arguing that the launching of the mini cultural revolution in 1971 also brought him into conflict with the Party leader. He did, however, give due credit to the other manifestations of opposition, such as the miners' strike in 1977, the Braşov protest of November 1987 and the dissidence expressed by certain intellectuals. In these circumstances, he concluded, 'the whole dissidence movement cannot be limited to the actions of some army officers and the stand taken by Mr Brucan, referred to by Messrs Brucan and Militaru.' Iliescu contended that he did not wish to minimise the role of the latter but that their actions should be assessed in the context of the whole dissident movement of the Ceauşescu years.

Turning to specific events of the Revolution, Iliescu considered Brucan's claim that Militaru was responsible for bringing the army out in support of the Revolution as unfounded, Militaru had only been made Minister of Defence on 24 December, while the army had already sided with the people in Timişoara on 20 December and in Bucharest on the night of 21-2 December. The army's attitude could not be ascribed to one person; it was the result of a far more complex process. Similarly, it was due to no merit on Militaru's part that the *Securitate* did not intervene in the Revolution. In Iliescu's view, most of the *Securitate* forces not only did not fire on the demonstrators but they actually joined the army in the defence of certain public buildings. Iliescu put his finger on a feature of many of Brucan's statements, namely the certainty with which he pronounced on events of whose nature he could have only had partial awareness: 'Mr Brucan speaks with great self-assurance of other aspects too, as if they were established truths, for instance of the fate of certain terrorists or of the presence of foreign terrorists. I must admit that I am not that sure [about these things].'

Amidst a barrage of claim and counter-claim, it was at last refreshing to hear a leading player in the Revolution admit to an uncertainty about certain of its episodes. At the same time, the disclosures made by Brucan and Militaru shed new light on the variety of security forces which Ceauşescu could call upon to defend his regime and partly confirmed what beforehand was only suspected about the machinery of coercion in the later years of Ceauşescu's rule. By the same token, one can understand how easy it was, given the diversity of these forces and the lack of

information about them, to give misleading figures about their strength, including the numbers of personnel employed by the *Securitate*. Indeed, conflicting figures were given by official Romanian sources after the overthrow of Ceaușescu of the number of persons working in it. In some cases, with generous interpretation, the disparity can be attributed to imprecision as to what is meant by *Securitate*. Without such generosity it might be attributed to disinformation. By and large, the numbers released from different sources did tally with each other after adjustments were made for the branches of the *Securitate* to which they referred. Thus, Defence Minister Col. Gen. Victor Stănculescu, referring to the personnel employed in the six directorates of the *Securitate*, including the local county and municipality of Bucharest branches, gave a figure of about 8,400.⁸⁴ This figure did not include the technical and communications staff of the *Securitate* nor the troops of the Ministry of the Interior. President Iliescu, taking into account the technical and communications personnel and officers (but not lower ranks) of the Ministry of the Interior troops, put the figure at about 15,000.⁸⁵ Since conspiracy theories are Romania's stock in trade, it was not surprising that the discrepancy was converted by some Romanian journalists into proof of the continued existence of the *Securitate* under a new name, that of the SRI. Despite their faulty logic they were, in essence, correct. Virgil Măgureanu, the Director of the SRI, admitted that many former DSS officers were purged in June 1991 but revealed that 50 per cent of the new staff were new recruits.⁸⁶ In other words, more than eighteen months after the Revolution, 50 per cent of the SRI's personnel were *Securitate* employees.

The events of late December 1989 showed that the forces of the *Securitate* were only as efficient as their weaknesses allowed them to be. They were not trained in dealing with crowd control, still less was the army, and the heavy-handed actions of forces from both bodies resulted in the deaths of many of the 1,033 official victims of the Revolution: 270 of the dead were soldiers, as were 673 of the 2,383 wounded.⁸⁷ Most of the soldiers were

⁸⁴ *România liberă*, 28 February 1990, p. 1.

⁸⁵ *România literară*, 5 July 1990, p. 14.

⁸⁶ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 14 April 1993, p. 4.

⁸⁷ *Adevărul*, 21 February 1990, p. 1.

killed as a result of 'friendly fire'. About 800 suspected 'terrorists' were arrested by the army but were later freed in the course of 1990. Maj. Gen. Mugurel Florescu, the Deputy Prosecutor General, said that many had been released through lack of witnesses since the people who had brought them in left and did not return.⁸⁸ A partial list of those detained as 'terrorists' was published in the weekly *Tinerama* in September 1993 but it is not certain that all those named actually fired on soldiers and civilians. Still less is it known under whose authority they might have been acting. As this account of some of the events in Bucharest on 21 December shows, the forces deployed against the demonstrators were drawn from the army, the Ministry of Interior troops, the troops of the militia, the Patriotic Guards and the USLA. It is quite likely that the terrorists were an assortment of renegade elements from all these forces and the use of the term 'terrorist' by the populace and the media was an attempt to rationalise opposition to the fledgling authority of the revolutionary government. This same assortment made it difficult for the authorities to clearly implicate, in the case of the *Securitate*, and disculpate, in the case of the army, particular forces in their resistance to the new order and therefore avoid the embarrassment of admitting that soldiers, militia and *Securitate* officers were equally involved in shedding innocent blood. After Ceauşescu's execution, the military procurator was given the order to release all 'terrorist' suspects. By whom is not yet clear.

In assessing the role of the *Securitate* in the events of December 1989, a distinction must be made between the actions of some of its forces before Ceauşescu's flight on 22 December and after. In the first place, it should be remembered that mass demonstrations against Ceauşescu occurred only in a small number of Romania's cities and that in the majority there was a relative calm. The greatest anti-Ceauşescu demonstrations before 22 December were in Timișoara, Bucharest and Cluj. The example of Timișoara was followed initially by cities in Transylvania, notably Arad and Cluj, but in most cities in Moldavia and Wallachia, with the exception of Bucharest, there was calm. In these areas, the *Securitate* forces and the army kept a low profile. By contrast, army units in Timișoara obeyed Ceauşescu's order to open fire, given at

⁸⁸ *The Times*, 22 December 1991.

4 p.m. on 17 December. They were joined by snipers in civilian clothes who fired upon the demonstrators from various buildings. The latter might either have been USLA forces or militia from the FOI or special intervention forces. In the afternoon of 18 December, *Securitate* troops under the command some say of Col. Gen. Ion Coman, the Central Committee secretary responsible for the armed forces and security, opened fire on civilians who had assembled near the cathedral, killing several of them.⁸⁹ The number of those who died from gunshot wounds in the county hospital in the period from 17 to 27 December was about eighty.⁹⁰ In Cluj twenty-five demonstrators were shot dead by army units on 21 December.⁹¹

In Sibiu, where Nicu Ceaușescu, the dictator's son, was the county Party secretary, demonstrators took to the streets chanting anti-Ceaușescu slogans on the morning of 21 December and an assortment of armed militia (FOI), *Securitate* troops and cadets from three army academies in the cities were sent onto the streets to maintain public order. Eye-witnesses stated that the *Securitate* troops opened fire on the demonstrators at midday. The protesters eventually made their way to the *Securitate* and militia headquarters, which were alongside each other and opposite one of the military academies, and demanded the release of those demonstrators who had been arrested. After getting no response from the head of the *Securitate*, Lieut. Col. Petrișor, some in the crowd of 3,000 began to stone the *Securitate* HQ late in the evening. They then set fire to the trees around the militia HQ, an act which led to shots being fired from inside the building. Four demonstrators were killed and eleven wounded. The *Securitate* and militia chiefs asked the commander of the Sibiu military garrison, Lieutenant Colonel Dragonir, for reinforcements and three APCs were sent to guard the militia.⁹²

The protesters remained outside the *Securitate* and militia buildings throughout the night, and about midday on 22 December

⁸⁹ F. Medeleț and M. Ziman, '16-22 decembrie 1989. O cronică a revoluției la Timișoara', *Magazin Istoric*, no. 5 (May 1990), p. 4.

⁹⁰ M. Milin, *Timișoara, 15-21 decembrie '89*, Timișoara, 1990, p. 102.

⁹¹ A list of their names appears in *Fapta Transilvăneană* (Transylvanian deed), special edition, September 1992.

⁹² P. Abrudan, *Sibiul în revoluția din decembrie 1989*, Sibiu: Casa Armatei, 1990, pp. 24-7.

they tried to force the gates of the *Securitate* building. At that point, automatic fire resumed, first from the *Securitate* headquarters and then from those of the militia. Shortly afterwards, the fire was directed at the military academy opposite and at the cadets who were guarding the militia buildings. There followed a veritable gun battle between the army cadets, led by their officers, and the militia and *Securitate* officers. A group of militia, dressed in khaki jackets, tried to gain entry to the academy but were captured by the defenders. Other cadets took an APC and opened fire on the militia and *Securitate* buildings. In the course of the afternoon, militia and *Securitate* officers also tried to take the two other military academies and regular soldiers and civilians were fired upon by snipers at other points in the town. As a result of these attacks, more than fifty people were killed, eight of whom were soldiers, twenty-three from the *Securitate* and militia, and more than thirty civilians.⁹³

The pattern of events in Sibiu was repeated in other cities, on the most spectacular scale in Bucharest. Once again, it must be remembered that the attack on the army in Sibiu took place after Ceaușescu's flight on 22 December and from the evidence presented at the trial of the *Securitate* and militia men captured in Sibiu, it was carefully coordinated by the local *Securitate* chief Lieut. Col. Dragomir. This pointed the finger at the involvement of the *Securitate*, and its head, Col. Gen. Iulian Vlad, in an attempt to frustrate the efforts of the embryonic revolutionary government to assert its authority and thereby pave the way for a restoration of Ceaușescu to power. This, of course, was the very accusation levelled at Vlad by Silviu Brucan on 24 December 1989. It was precisely the fear that *Securitate* snipers attacking the barracks at Tîrgoviște where the two Ceaușescus were held might succeed in freeing them which drove the inner council of the National Salvation Front, composed of Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman and Brucan, together with a number of generals including Nicolae Militaru, to decide that same evening, according to Brucan, to put the dictatorial couple on trial and, although Brucan does not admit to this, once found guilty, to execute them immediately afterwards.⁹⁴ Acquittal or even mere imprisonment after conviction

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁹⁴ Brucan, *The Wasted Generation*, p. 181.

would have left the *Securitate* elements loyal to the Ceașescu a reason for fighting on. The validity of their reasoning was borne out by the gradual falling away of attacks by snipers in Bucharest after the executions on Christmas Day.

A final word is due about an aspect of the *Securitate's* activity about which little has been said – its control of Romanian exports. The extent of recent revelations in the Romanian press disclosing the activity of the foreign trade company *Dunărea* in direct subordination to the Centre for Foreign Intelligence (CIE) of the *Securitate* offers enough material for a paper on this subject alone. The discussion here shall simply be limited to saying that, as this author has learned through a private source, the export of Romanian arms was managed by *Dunărea*, which in the decade 1979–89 is estimated to have had a revenue of \$ 1.4 billion. These monies enabled the *Securitate* to purchase special machinery and apparatus for its own use. The relationship of the *Dunărea* sales to those of arms made through the intermediary of Marin Ceașescu, one of the President's brothers who was head of the Romanian Foreign Trade Mission in Vienna, has not been satisfactorily established (Marin committed suicide on 28 December 1989). The proceeds of these sales are reported to have been placed in a secret Swiss account.⁹⁵

Nicolae Ceașescu had seen arms sales as a means of paying off Romania's debts to Western banks. His best customer was Egypt. After Cairo's decision to break its close military links with the Soviet Union in the mid-1970s, Ceașescu stepped in to supply spare parts for Egypt's Soviet-made tanks and artillery. Romania also supplied reconditioned equipment to Iraq during the Iran–Iraq war, thus offsetting the poor performance of its civilian industrial exports by earning hard currency through the export of cheap, unsophisticated weapons. The success of this strategy made Romania the second largest exporter of arms in the Warsaw Pact after the Soviet Union in 1987. Using his links with Cairo, Ceașescu was alleged by the West German weekly *Der Spiegel* at the beginning of May 1989 to have obtained the technology for the production of a medium-range missile system which a firm in Munich had supplied to Argentina. It was passed

⁹⁵ 'Activitatea Comisiei guvernamentale pentru recuperarea fondurilor deturnate din patrimoniul statului', *NU*, no. 86 (2–9 September 1992).

from Argentina to Egypt and Iraq and, on payment of \$200 million to Cairo, it was transferred to Romania.

Equally intriguing was the allegation made in an article in the *Washington Post* that Marin and his brother Ilie, First Deputy Defence Minister, supplied the United States with advanced Soviet military technology during the 1980s. As part of a wider intelligence drive directed by the CIA into the upper echelons of East European defence ministries, the United States government is said to have paid more than \$40 million to Romania through foreign intermediaries in the decade since the relationship with the two Ceauşescu brothers began in 1979. According to CIA sources, about 20 per cent of the money was deposited in Swiss bank accounts controlled by the Ceauşescu family. Although Nicolae Ceauşescu was not personally involved, it is inconceivable that he did not know about the operation. Among the weapons obtained by the CIA in this way through Romania were the latest version of the *Shilka*, a sophisticated Soviet anti-aircraft mobile rocket launcher that had been modified by the Romanians, and radar systems used in identifying targets and directing the fire of Soviet anti-aircraft weapons.⁹⁶

Another source of hard currency for the *Securitate* was the commission charged by the directors of various Romanian-controlled companies such as *Crescent*, *Terra*, *Delta*, *Trawe* and *Carpați* from foreign companies for the conclusion of contracts. These payments were handled by a special agency within the CIE known as AVS (*ațiuni speciale valutare* – special hard currency actions) which was staffed by between fifteen and twenty officers. A company called *Argus* was used as a screen for the AVS and paid the salaries of the employees of these foreign trade companies.⁹⁷ The *Carpați* company was an exception; it was part of the *Carpați* enterprise which included the National Tourist Office with the same name and was controlled by the political and administrative section of the RCP. All 'special hard currency dealings' with Socialist bloc countries were channelled through *Carpați* to the coffers of the Party, and in this respect such a procedure followed

⁹⁶ 'Ceauşescu's brothers "sold secrets to US"', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 May 1990, quoting a report in the *Washington Post* of 6 May.

⁹⁷ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 4 September 1992, p. 3.

a practice inherited from the Soviets. But similar payments of a Western provenance were handled by the *Securitate*.⁹⁸

According to the CIE defector, Liviu Turcu, the responsibility for the special hard currency dealings on Romanian soil rested until the mid-1980s with a department within the Third Directorate which dealt with economic counter-espionage. This department was involved in surveillance of foreign businessmen and their offices in Romania and the company *Argus* was used as a screen for this purpose. Later, this department was placed under the operational control of the AVS unit within the CIE. However, the SICE, a special unit within the *Securitate* staffed by forty-five officers, was set up under Postelnicu with duties which included special hard currency payments. Its relationship to the Third Directorate and later to the AVS unit of the CIE is not clear.

What has become obvious is that *Securitate* control of foreign trade under Ceașescu has placed its officers in a position of privilege in post-revolutionary Romania. Inertia on the part of the new Romanian governments has meant that *Securitate* officers, with their specialist knowledge, their foreign contacts and their continuing influence within the Ministry for Foreign Trade, have triggered the creation of a veritable economic mafia. Using their privileged commercial expertise, these officers have set up private import-export businesses, and by exploiting their positions within the Foreign Trade Ministry and other government agencies they have cornered a significant part of Romania's export activity. The depth of this penetration of the Romanian economy by former *Securitate* officers has been signalled by the CIE defector Turcu and by anonymous sources within the former *Securitate*.

Turcu has disclosed that Mișu Negrițoiu, one-time Minister for Economic Reform and Strategy in the government sworn in on 20 November 1992 and from September 1993, economic counsellor to President Iliescu, was sent as head of the Romanian Commercial Bureau in Los Angeles. This position, Turcu alleges, was a CIE one. When the bureau was closed for reasons of economy, Negrițoiu was accredited as a representative of the Romanian Olympic team at the Los Angeles Olympics of 1984. He was later made director of Arpimex, the foreign trade company

⁹⁸ Liviu Turcu, 'Cum pot fi găsite conturile lui Ceașescu', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 8 September 1992.

a company managed by the CIE.⁹⁹ In March 1990, he was made head of the Romanian Commercial Agency in New York and then director of the Romanian Development Agency. As Turcu asks of Negrițoiu: 'If the man invested with the highly important and delicate problem of economic reform is merely a dummy, who are the people manipulating him?' Negrițoiu in reply said that his only connection with the CIE was a 'professional' one.

The name Negrițoiu has appeared in a document naming *Securitate* officers allegedly working in the Foreign Trade Ministry which was given to some foreign journalists covering the May 1990 general elections. Several of the names were published in an article in *The Times* on 22 May.¹⁰⁰ The document claimed that '400 *Securitate* officers were running the foreign trade organisations'. All key positions in the Ministry of Foreign Trade were occupied by *Securitate* colonels. *Securitate* officers had also been appointed as diplomats. Among the latter were Col. Constantin Pîrvutoiu, listed as ambassador to the EC, and Major Cristeia, his deputy, who had formerly been CIE head of station in Paris. Col. Iancu, a former director of the company *Prodoexport*, was now a senior chancery official at the Romanian embassy in Vienna while Gen. Baclița was serving at the embassy in Teheran, Lieut. Col. Mateescu at the embassy in Warsaw and Col. Negrițoiu in New York. Officials in the Foreign Trade Ministry in Bucharest named as *Securitate* personnel were Col. Stoiculescu, former director of *Fructoexport*, who was now in charge of agricultural exports, Major Cornaciu, responsible for fruit exports, Col. Ghița, former director of *Metalimportexport*, who was dealing with metal exports, and Lieut. Col. Dumitrescu, who was involved with mineral exports and directed a company called *Terra*. Other *Securitate* officers in the international departments of the Foreign Trade Ministry were identified as Col. Talpaș, head of the Asian department overseeing Japanese and Korean investment in Romania, Col. Berindei (EC department), Col. Culău (Europe department) and Col. Mihoc (German department).

The Romanian press has furnished examples of how former senior Communists, in alliance with *Securitate* officers, have found

⁹⁹ Liviu Turcu, 'Biografia lui Mișu Negrițoiu', *Evenimentul Zilei*, 12 January 1993.

¹⁰⁰ R. Bassett, 'Securitate still hold key to business deals', *The Times*, 22 May 1990, p. 10.

a profitable niche in the private sector. The Getteco Company was set up by the family of Paul Niculescu-Mizil, a member of the Politburo who supported Ceaușescu's decision to suppress the demonstrations in Timișoara by using force. Niculescu-Mizil was tried for 'favouring the criminal [Ceaușescu]' and sentenced to three and a half years' imprisonment on 25 March 1991. The company is allegedly run by Niculescu-Mizil's daughter, Lidia, and his son-in-law, Coman Ștefănescu; in 1992, it won a lucrative contract from the government to import grain. Responsible for the company's security is Virgil Ionescu, alleged to have been a lieutenant colonel in the Bucharest *Securitate*, who was carried over into the SRI before retiring on health grounds in 1991. Other members of staff include Gheorghe Vasile, a former *Securitate* major and chauffeur of the Ceaușescus, and Ion Tomina and Paul Pleșoianu, former USLA officers. Among the company's advisors are Gen. Gheorghe Marcu, the DIE officer who was said to have acted as intermediary in the ransoming of Jews at the end of the 1950s, Colonel Filip Teodorescu, deputy head of the Third Directorate for counter-espionage, and Col. Constantin Olcescu, named by Pacepa as DIE station chief in Beirut in the 1970s.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ *Academia Cațavencu*, no. 14 (13-19 April 1993).

ANNEX 1

In March 1978, the DSS was created within the Ministry of the Interior. Its head was given the rank of Minister-Secretary of State within the Ministry of the Interior and some directorate chiefs held the position of Deputy Minister. The DSS inherited the structure of the DS with a few modifications as constituted in June 1973, and preserved it until its abolition on 30 December 1989.

COMPOSITION OF THE DSS, 22 DECEMBER 1989

Minister-Secretary of State, head of DSS Col. Gen. Iulian Vlad
Deputy Minister, head of CIE Lieut. Gen. Aristotel Stamatoiu
Deputy Minister Maj. Gen. GIANU Bucurescu
State Secretary Maj. Gen. Ștefan Alexie

POLITICAL COUNCIL

Head Maj. Gen. Ioan Marcu

10 officers, 2 non-commissioned officers (NCOs), 1 civilian

UM 0544 CIE (Centre for Foreign Intelligence)

Head Lieut. Gen. Aristotel Stamatoiu

715 officers, 36 technical warrant officers (WOs), 197 NCOs, 111 civilians

UM 0195 (CIE counter-intelligence, control of Romanian embassies abroad, monitoring Romanian *émigrés*)

Head Maj. Gen. Ioan Moț

386 officers, 5 technical WOs, 42 NCOs, 18 civilians

UM 0110 (CIE intelligence in Socialist countries)

Head Maj. Gen. Victor Niculiciou

264 officers, 8 technical WOs, 15 NCOs, 17 civilians

UM 0525 (CIE cipher)

Head Maj. Gen. Gheorghe Radu

412 officers, 15 technical WOs, 32 NCOs, 16 civilians

ICE Dunarea (UM0107)

Head Col. Constantin Gavril

115 officers, 10 NCOs, 12 civilians

NATIONAL DIRECTORATES

Directorate I (Domestic intelligence [UM 0610])

Head Col. Gheorghe Rațiu

Deputy heads Col. Ilie Merce, Lieut. Col. Gabriel Anastasiu,

Lieut. Col. Elena Moca

98 officers, 8 NCOs, 8 civilians

Directorate II (Economic counter-espionage [UM 0617])

Head Maj. Gen. Emil Macri*Deputy heads* Lieut. Col. Constantin Stan, Lieut. Col. Claudiu Bucur
150 officers, 6 NCOs, 11 civilians

Directorate III (Counter-espionage [UM 0625])

Head Maj. Gen. Aurelian Mortoiu*Deputy heads* Col. Filip Teodorescu, Lieut. Col. Emil Rădulescu,
Lieut. Col. Gheorghe Diaconescu
215 officers, 4 technical WOs, 22 NCOs, 1 civilian

Directorate IV (Military counter-espionage [UM 0632])

Head Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Vasile*Deputy heads* Col. Radu Balasoiu, Lieut. Col. Mihai Uță,
Lieut. Col. Dumitru Petanca

926 officers, 17 technical WOs, 160 NCOs, 30 civilians

Directorate V (Protection of party leadership [UM 0666])

Head Maj. Gen. Marin Neagoe

306 officers, 14 technical WOs, 144 NCOs 20 civilians

Directorate VI (Penal investigation [UM 0638])

Head Col. Gheorghe Vasile*Deputy head* Patru Murariu

36 officers, 1 technical WO, 26 NCOs, 9 civilians

SPECIAL UNITS

Special Anti-terrorist Unit (UM 0620)

Head Col. Gheorghe Ardeleanu*Deputy heads* Lieut. Col. Gheorghe Troșca, Lieut. Col. Ion Bliort
184 officers, 21 technical WOs, 580 NCOs, 10 civilians

Special Surveillance Unit 'F'

Head Col. Ion Bajenaru*Deputy head* Lieut. Col. Paula Stanciu

447 officers, 13 technical WOs, 252 NCOs, 65 civilians

Special Service for Protecting State Secrets (UM 0500)

43 officers, 8 NCOs, 6 civilians

Independent Service for Foreign Trade

Head Col. Ștefan Alexandru

41 officers, 2 NCOs, 2 civilians

Centre for Information and Documentation

Head Lieut. Col. Dan Nicolici

174 officers, 32 technical WOs, 50 NCOs, 16 civilians

Service 'D' (Disinformation – e.g. false rumours, discrediting 'reactionary' groups abroad)

Head Col. Dumitru Tatu

20 officers, 2 NCOs

Independent Law Secretariat

Head Col. Florica Dobre

Deputy head Lieut. Col. Aurel Rogojan

19 officers, 9 NCOs

Independent Service for Cadre Education and Mobilisation

Head Col. Maria Petrescu

Deputy head Eugen Jeledintan

28 officers, 7 NCOs

TECHNICAL AND TRANSMISSION COMMAND

Head Maj. Gen. Ovidiu Diaconescu

20 officers, 3 technical WOs, 10 NCOs, 9 civilians

Service 'C' (Transport of secret documents)

Head Colonel Mircea Ștefănescu

5 officers, 1 technical WO, 71 NCOs

Special Unit 'P' (Technical research and planning)

Head Lieut. Col. Teodor Hristea

171 officers, 257 technical WOs, 9 NCOs, 28 civilians

Special Unit 'R' (Radio between DSS and militia and Ministry of Interior troops; intercepting foreign radio transmissions)

Head Lieut. Col. Tiberiu Lopatită

230 officers, 100 WOs, 20 NCOs, 99 civilians

Special Unit 'S' (intercepting correspondence)

Head Col. Constantin Marinescu

Deputy heads Lieut. Col. Eugen Grigorescu, Lieut. Col. Aurora Negoita

300 officers, 7 technical WOs, 67 NCOs, 14 civilians

Special Technical Installation Unit 'T' ('Tonola' – surveillance of telephones and video monitoring)

Head Maj. Gen. Alexandru Țencu

Deputy heads Lieut. Col. Gheorghe Busu, Lieut. Col. Toader

404 officers, 35 technical WOs, 19 NCOs, 19 civilians

Special Unit for Transporting the Party Leader

22 officers, 19 technical WOs, 3 NCOs

TRAINING CENTRES FOR DSS PERSONNEL

School for cadres, Grădiștea (near Bucharest)

61 officers, 12 technical WOs, 18 NCOs, 79 civilians

Centre, Bran (near Brașov)

8 officers, 5 technical WOs, 4 NCOs, 13 civilians

Special Instruction Centre, Bucharest

12 officers, 8 NCOs, 5 civilians

THE COUNTY AND BUCHAREST DSS OFFICES

4,017 officers, 182 technical WOs, 1,297 NCOs, 563 civilians

COMMAND OF THE SECURITY TROOPS

Head Maj. Gen. Grigore Ghiță

1,387 officers, 136 technical WOs, 924 NCOs, 536 civilians,
20,387 troops

The total number of personnel in the DSS in December 1989 was 38,682, of whom 23,370 were in the security troops' command. The remaining figure of 15,312 covered 6,602 in the national directorates and special units, 2,426 in the CIE, 6,059 in the county offices, and 225 in the schools.

In addition to the security troops, the regime could call upon the Inspectorate General of the Militia, referred to in the DSS as the Forces of Internal Order (*Forțele de Ordine Internă*), for maintaining public order. The head of the militia was Major General Constantin Nuță and his deputy was Major General Mihalea Velicu.

By comparison, the East German Ministry of State Security (*Stasi*) had some 95,000 officers and 100,000 informants in a population of 17 million. It also employed an unknown number of unofficial officers who did not figure in the establishment. The distribution of the 95,000 over the *Stasi* departments was as follows: 16,000 security troops; 13,000 in administration and finance; 10,000 in the local districts; 21,000 in communications control; 5,000 in communications interception; 9,000 in counter-intelligence; 8,500 in the cipher section; 5,000 in the anti-terrorist section; 4,000 in overseas intelligence (HVA); 2,200 in the prison service; 1,300 in analysis of information.

ANNEX 2

THE CIE/DIE

The Department of Foreign Intelligence (DIE) was subordinated to the DSS. It was renamed *Direcția Generală de Informații Externe* (DGIE) in March 1978, and in October of the same year rechristened *Centrul de Informații Externe* (CIE). At the time of the Revolution, it numbered 2,426 officers and men within UM 0544, UM 0195, UM 0110, UM 0525 and ICE *Dunărea*. Between 1978 and 1989, it had several heads. Col. Gen. Gheorghe Nicolae Doicaru, who had been appointed to direct the Foreign Intelligence directorate in 1958 and had risen to the rank of First Deputy Minister of the Interior and National Security counsellor to Ceaușescu, was replaced in March 1978 by Lieut. Gen. Alexandru Dănescu, according to some Bucharest sources. Other sources claim that Maj. Gen. Alexandru Tăunescu took over at this time. Romanian sources to whom I have access deny that Ion Mihai Pacepa was head of the DGIE at the time of his defection. Such a position is claimed for Pacepa in *Red Horizons*, but in the foreword to Pacepa's more recent book, *Moștenirea Kremlinului* it is acknowledged that he was Deputy Director of the DGIE. In October 1978, the CIE was given a new head, Romus Dima, a civilian and a Deputy Minister of the Interior. Lieut. Gen. Nicolae Pleșiță took over from Dima in 1980 and was given the position of First Deputy Minister and he in turn was replaced in 1984 by Lieut. Gen. Aristotel Stamatoiu, a Deputy Minister. Stamatoiu was among the *Securitate* chiefs arrested on 30 December 1989. Pleșiță and Doicaru were not detained. Doicaru is said to have died in an accident with a shotgun in March 1991 at the vineyard of Costești, just south of Focșani.

ANNEX 3
SAMPLE DOCUMENTS OF THE DSS

A

To be returned or re-registered within 10 days

MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

STRICTLY SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE SECURITY

Copy no. 1

DIRECTORATE II

No. 261/N.C./ 00105121 1 May 1989

TO THE STATE SECURITY OF BUCHAREST MUNICIPALITY

Code 123/Z.A.

We enclose the personal file no. 2136 of the informer 'Olaf', who has been transferred from the fish processing centre to the Union of Fine Artists as an accountant.

Signed

HEAD OF THE DIRECTORATE HEAD OF SECTION

Maj. Gen. Emil Macri

Col. Vasile Mocanu

B

Directorate II

STRICTLY SECRET

261/NC/25.08.88

Sole Copy

File no. 1977

[Report on the contribution of the informer 'Olaf']

The informer 'Olaf', a legal adviser at the fish processing centre, was recruited in November 1977.

Although the informer has made a satisfactory contribution

over the years, recently (between 1987-8) his output has been weak, due mainly to frequent illness which has also affected our contact arrangements.

During 1987 he provided us with two reports regarding the attitudes of some of those at his workplace who travel abroad.

Recently I renewed contact with this informer for the purpose of consolidating my work of training and advising him.

I am of the opinion that since he has experience of collaborating with us, is of the right calibre and is loyal, he could continue to be useful to us. For this reason, I propose that we move the informer 'Olaf' into the category of active supporters and that our records be adjusted accordingly.

Colonel Galopriş

ANNEX 4

SOME OFFICERS SERVING IN THE DSS AND
THE FOI (MILITIA) IN DECEMBER 1989

Third Directorate: Lieut.-Col. Manea

Fifth Directorate: Major M. Iosif, Capt. I. Ipcar,
Capt. M. Berbecaru, Capt. C. Marin

Head of militia in Bucharest: Col. Marin Bărbulescu

Head of militia, sector 4, Bucharest: Col. Ababei Romică

Head of militia, sector 3, Bucharest: Col. Ion Vergu

Head of CTS (Security Troops Command): Col. Pavelescu

Head of DSS Bucharest: Col. Gheorghe Goran

Head of Cluj County DSS: Maj. Gen. Ilie Șerbănoiu

Source: *Evenimentul Zilei*, 17 July 1993, p. 4.

ANNEX 5
FIFTH DIRECTORATE OF THE DSS

After the Revolution, there were found in one of the rooms of the Fifth Directorate HQ on Strada Onești 7, Bucharest, 6 machine rifles, 69 machine pistols, 4 heavy machine-guns, 370 grenades, 96,000 rounds of 7.62 mm. ammunition and 35,000 rounds of 9 mm. ammunition. Besides these conventional weapons, there were also discovered seventeen attaché cases in which a machine pistol could be concealed and fired by pressing a trigger in the handle. In the register of weapons held in the room, it was specified that these cases were to be used 'on [special] missions'.

Source: Evenimentul Zilei, 14 July 1993, p.3.

EPILOGUE

Some scholars have suggested a compatibility in Ceaușescu's authoritarian rule with Romanian tradition, arguing that his 'kind of regime was not entirely unfamiliar or alien to the experience and social composition of Romanian society'. They have gone on to maintain that the stability of Ceaușescu's regime was 'partially due to the congruence between the structure and ethos of his rule and the historic experience, social composition and notion of authority held by large sectors of Romanian society'.¹ There is some truth in this assertion but it overlooks the coercive, totalitarian nature of the rule exercised by both Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu. Nothing in the Romanians' experience could have prepared them for the reign of terror that descended upon them after 1944. Only after the eradication of a large segment of the professional class and of the independent peasantry could the Communist Party count on the obedience of a cowed people in whom fear had become second nature.

Dispelling that fear and implanting new institutions which can gain the confidence of the people is an essential foundation for a democratic order. After decades of Communist rule marked by lies, when mere lip-service was paid to the constitution, when parliament was side-stepped and government conducted by presidential decree, when personal conduct was regulated by unpublished 'internal orders' (*dispoziții interne*) which the authorities used to justify intervention in the public's daily lives, the population craved transparency and truth in public life. A government that fails to satisfy these needs, and in addition attempts to cover up the injustices and iniquities of the past, runs the risk of generating

¹ K. Jowitt, 'An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 68, no. 3 (September 1974), p. 1188, quoted from Bacon, p. 149.

a cancerous sapping of its authority and that lack of authority will drain its ability to govern. Many of these problems facing Romania after the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu were shared by the other former satellite states of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Not one of them was ever legitimised in free, multi-party elections. Their power rested on coercion and not on broad public support. That coercion was buttressed by the Soviet Union. The moment that Mikhail Gorbachev made it clear that the Soviet Union would not stand in the way of political change in its client states, then challenges to the Communist regimes quickly surfaced. Yet the violent manner of Ceauşescu's demise sets Romania's experience of political change apart from that of the other East European states and was itself an indication that in Romania the peaceful overthrow of dictatorship was impossible. Whereas Ceauşescu succeeded in uniting Romanians in opposition to him, his fall threw them into confusion. The legacy of totalitarian rule in Romania is therefore markedly different from that elsewhere.

In what at the time seemed to be the only revolution to live up to its name, the reasoning in the West was that because Romania had cast aside a Communist dictator, it would become democratic and peaceful. The Romanians whom this author met in Bucharest in the closing days of December – and these were largely young men and women in their late teens and early twenties who were helping to guard the Central Committee building and the television headquarters – were exuberant at Ceauşescu's overthrow, yet that exuberance was tinged with apprehension about the future. That apprehension proved all too prophetic. At Christmas 1989, the Western and Romanian media were interpreting the overthrow as the 'people's revolution', rightly praising the predominant role of the young. However within a month many Romanians had become disillusioned, complaining bitterly about the 'theft' of their revolution.

That they should do so is not surprising. Although the Romanian Communist Party was declared dead in January 1990, no death certificate was produced. Members of the Party merely exchanged their cards for those of the ruling National Salvation Front and most of them carried on as if nothing had changed in Romanian political life. The NSF tried to blend into the present and bury the past. Its successors, the Democratic National Salvation Front

and the Romanian Party of Social Democracy (PDSR) have shown a similar reluctance to question the past. Only some of those responsible for the bloodshed in December 1989 have been brought to trial. They include twenty-five members of the Politburo and the Central Committee and eleven generals in the *Securitate* and the militia. For the events in Timișoara, twenty-nine leading figures in the Communist Party, the *Securitate* and the militia have been convicted of 'incitement to murder'. Yet these convictions relate to the events between 16 and 22 December. The 800 suspected 'terrorists' who were arrested by the army between 22 and 28 December were freed early in 1990. Many senior army, *Securitate* and militia officers, whom their own subordinates have publicly identified as giving orders for firing on demonstrators in Bucharest and in Cluj on 21 December, remain at liberty and some of them have been promoted to even more senior positions within the army and police. Their names have been revealed in the Romanian press.²

Under a decree signed by President Iliescu on 26 December 1989, the Department of State Security was removed from the control of the Ministry of the Interior and placed under the Ministry of National Defence.³ In effect, the *Securitate* was integrated into the system and legitimised, thus enabling its officers to organise the release of all their colleagues held on suspicion of firing on demonstrators during the Revolution. It is true that, on 30 December a further decree was issued under which the *Securitate* was dismantled and its directorate chiefs placed under arrest or in the reserve but this was merely window-dressing. By then, most of the suspected 'terrorists' had been given their freedom. The unreliability of witnesses, bureaucratic inertia and the desire to protect vested interests involving President Iliescu's bodyguard, the SPP (*Serviciul de Pază și de Protocol*), which contains officers from the former Fifth Directorate, and the anti-terrorist brigade of the SRI, whose numbers include former USLA men, explain why the investigations into the deaths of the officially recognised 1,000 or so victims of the Revolution have not been completed and why relatively few charges have been brought. Some senior

² For example, see *Evenimentul Zilei*, 14 July 1993; *România liberă*, 28 December 1993, p. 10.

³ *România liberă*, 27 December 1989, p. 1.

Securitate officers have been brought to book for the shooting of demonstrators during the Revolution.

Iulian Vlad was the first of the *Securitate* chiefs to be arrested on 28 December 1989. Maj. Gen. Gianu Bucurescu (Vlad's deputy), Lieut. Gen. Aristotel Stamatoiu (head of the CIE), Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Vasile (head of the Fourth Directorate), Maj. Gen. Ion Moț and Maj. Gen. Alexandru Țencu were arrested a few days later, with the arrest of the first three announced on Radio Bucharest on 31 December 1989. Vlad was charged with 'complicity to genocide', which carried a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. The charge was later reduced without explanation by the military court to 'favouring genocide' with a maximum ten-year sentence; he was found guilty on 22 July 1991 and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. The sentence was to run concurrently with two other lesser terms, one of three and a half years, which Vlad received in March 1991 for illegally detaining Dumitru Mazilu in December 1989, and a second of four years given in May 1991 for the 'abusive detention' of more than 1,000 demonstrators in late December. On 30 December 1993, Vlad was released from jail on parole.

Other *Securitate* chiefs were sentenced in May 1991 to terms of two to five years' imprisonment for 'illegally detaining' and 'abusively interrogating' an unspecified number of protesters during the Revolution. On 10 May, Maj. Gen. Gianu Bucurescu received a prison term of four years, Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Dănescu one of three and a half years, and Col. Marin Bărbulescu, head of the Bucharest militia, five years. Lieut. Gen. Gheorghe Vasile, the military counter-intelligence chief, and Col. Gheorghe Goran, head of the Bucharest DSS, were acquitted of these charges.⁴ In a separate trial, Maj. Gen. Marin Neagoe, head of the Fifth Directorate, was sentenced on 28 May 1991 to seven years in prison for 'abusing his office'.⁵ Generals Stamatoiu and Mortoiu were also sent to prison but were released in November 1992. Nicolae Andruța Ceaușescu, the commandant of the Ministry of the Interior military academy, was sentenced in June 1990 to fifteen years' imprisonment for leading some 2,000 officer cadets

⁴ BBC Monitoring Service, *Summary of World Broadcasts* (henceforth *SWB*), EE/1074 (17 May 1991), B/7.

⁵ *SWB*, EE/1086 (31 May 1991), B/18.

of the Ministry of the Interior troops in the shooting of demonstrators in University Square on 21 December 1989. The former Minister of the Interior, Tudor Postelnicu, was tried on a charge of 'genocide' at the end of January 1990 and sentenced on 2 February to life imprisonment.

Injustices committed by the *Securitate* before the Revolution have also begun to be addressed. Postelnicu's most notorious predecessor, Alexandru Drăghici, fled the country with his Hungarian wife Martha shortly after the Revolution and joined his daughter Alexandra in her Budapest flat to which she had moved in 1988. A request for his extradition was made to the Hungarian Ministry of Justice by the Romanian Procurator General on 19 August 1992 but was turned down on the grounds that there was a fifteen-year statute of limitations on prosecution for crimes and that in the particular case for which Drăghici was to be tried, this term had expired on 4 December 1969. At the same time, the Hungarian Ministry of Justice made it clear that this was not its final word on the matter and requested further information on the case. On 29 December 1992, the Romanian authorities renewed their extradition request, arguing that the statute of limitations had been suspended after the December Revolution. Again the Hungarians refused to hand Drăghici over, and therefore on 23 May 1993 the trial of Drăghici and other *Securitate* officers for 'incitement to murder' Ibrahim Șefit, nicknamed 'the Turk', in Sibiu in 1954 began in his absence. Accused along with the former Minister of the Interior were Col. Gen. Nicolae Briceag, former head of the Sibiu district of the *Securitate*, Col. Ilie Munteanu and Col. Nicolae Luțenco.⁶ The trial was abandoned after the announcement of Drăghici's death in Budapest on Romanian radio on 13 December 1993.

Replying to public disquiet about the position of the DSS, Col. Gen. Victor Stănculescu, the Minister of Defence, listed the names of the *Securitate* generals arrested and reported that all officers of the Fifth Directorate, 436 in number, had been placed in the reserve, as had 611 of the 1,073 officers in the Fourth Directorate in charge of military counter-espionage. *Securitate* documents from December 1989 give the complements of the Fourth and Fifth Directorates as 1,133 and 484 officers

⁶ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 24 May 1993.

respectively. Stănculescu also claimed that the eavesdropping systems used by the *Securitate* had been dismantled on 22 December 1989 and that all listening centres and devices had been sealed off and placed under army guard. To dispel disbelief, he invited inspection of

...the former bugging and listening centres situated at numbers 6-8 and 14 of 13 December Street in Bucharest, in the Romanian Optics Factory, in the 23 August Factory, in the Bucharest Heavy Machine Plant, in the Bucharest Garments and Knitwear Factory and in the side rooms of all the capital's telephone exchanges. [Stănculescu announced the institutionalisation of]...certain structures which...have the task of ensuring the defence of the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and of preventing any actions meant to cause economic and social destabilisation or to hamper Romania's democratic development. [These structures were to be non-political and the leading positions in them filled]...only with officers of the Romanian army who have shown, through their abilities and deeds, loyalty to the country, people and the Revolution and who do not belong to any political party or movement.⁷

His assurances that 'no telephone conversation will be intercepted or listened to now, or in the future' and that 'no citizen, regardless of nationality, political affiliation, or religious convictions...is the target of the cadres in the new army structures [of the security service]' was received with total disbelief by the public, coming as it did from an officer who had been a deputy Minister of Defence under Ceauşescu. That disbelief was justified by the discovery in late May 1991 of hundreds of files on opposition figures compiled by the new security service, the SRI, which it had buried near the village of Berevoieşti,⁸ and by allegations in the Romanian press that Stănculescu had been directly involved in the sale of Romanian arms through the agency of the foreign trade company *Dunărea*.

Stănculescu's 'frankness' about the *Securitate* personnel did not extend to the fate of the 595 officers in the First, Second, Third

⁷ D. Deletant, 'The *Securitate* and the police state in Romania, 1964-89', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 9, no. 1 (January 1994), pp. 35-42.

⁸ *România liberă*, 21 May 1991.

and Sixth Directorates, who were passed over in silence, giving rise to suspicions that they had been integrated into the new Romanian security service, the SRI, whose establishment was decreed on 26 March 1990. The director of the new service, Virgil Măgureanu, admitted as much in a report to the joint session of the Romanian parliament on 22 November 1990 when he responded to growing public demands for information about the structure and activities of the SRI and attempted to allay suspicions that it was nothing more than a revamped DSS. The very act of reporting was an indication that the SRI was, unlike its predecessor, at least formally accountable to parliament and Măgureanu did not hesitate to make this point at the beginning of his report.

He then gave the fullest details yet revealed of the numbers employed in the former *Securitate*:

On 22 December 1989, the former DSS totalled 14,259 military cadres, including 8,159 officers and 5,105 warrant officers and non-commissioned officers, as well as 984 civilian personnel. Of this total, 8,376 officers and non-commissioned officers were working in information and operational sectors, 3,832 were working in central units and 4,544 were working in the countries. The other cadres were carrying out their activity in the *Securitate* troops – 2,859 officers and non-commissioned officers; in technical units 2,588 officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers; and in operational units 466 cadres. Of the total personnel of the former DSS, 2,841 were removed through the dismantlement of the central and territorial units; a further 2,769 cadres were placed in the reserve; 2,896 cadres of the former security troops were taken over by the Ministry of the Interior; and 449 were turned into a technical transmission unit by the Ministry of National Defence to ensure government telephone connections.⁹

Detailed as Măgureanu's revelations were, they covered only the numbers of those employed in the *Securitate* and made no mention of those who were working for it, not as officers in the national or county directorates but as what might be termed either surrogate employees, collaborators or informers in every

⁹ SWB, EE/0932 (27 November 1990), B/10.

ministry, office, factory, institute, hotel, hospital and school. This surrogate employment could take two principal forms. Connection through family or friendship with an officer in the *Securitate*, however tenuous, could be a guarantee of preferment in all state institutions, irrespective of personal merit, and the *Securitate* used this system of patronage to great effect. The advantages were reciprocal, for in return for the support of an officer, the employee was expected to pass back information. The second form involved branch officials of the Communist Party. In every institution, there was a local Party organisation whose secretary *Securitate* officers would regularly interview.

There were other, more basic, motives for collaboration with the *Securitate* which can be ascribed simply to human weakness: blackmail by the *Securitate*, a personal grudge or jealousy against an individual; the desire to feel part of a privileged group; insurance in times of difficulty. It should not be forgotten that the institutionalisation of police control itself made forms of collaboration a legal requirement. Every block of flats was required to nominate from amongst its residents a 'caretaker' who would be responsible not only for the upkeep of the building but also for keeping a register of all tenants and visitors who spent more than twenty-four hours in a flat. Every fortnight, the register would be inspected by the local *Securitate* officer in whose 'beat' the block fell. After the 1989 Revolution, some 'caretakers' were unfairly vilified as collaborators by their fellow tenants.

As noted earlier, fear is a great labour-saving device and it is a mark of the success of the *Securitate* in instilling that fear that Romanians came to hold the widespread belief that the visible presence of so many engaged in 'collaboration' with the secret police represented but a drop in the ocean of a ubiquitous network of officers and informers. The *Securitate* were as much a state of mind as the instrument of state terror. Figures ranging from one in ten to one in three of the population (i.e. 2.3 to 8 million) have been frequently picked from the air as an estimate of the *Securitate's* strength, but none of these figures has any solid basis of evidence to support them and such numbers would have to include all the casual informants and busybodies which all totalitarian systems produce in parasitic abundance.¹⁰

¹⁰ Bacon, *Romanian Secret Police*, p. 135.

Some of the speculative newspaper estimates are boosted by the inclusion of all those who had contact with agencies of the Ministry of the Interior, irrespective of whether they came under the control of the *Securitate*. Thus all those who were granted passports were adjudged to have made concessions to the *Securitate*, either in the form of accepting a *misiune* (a mission) in the form of reporting on the activities of Romanian relatives and friends abroad or of informing on them at home, for which the favour of a passport was the reward. This is certainly the case with many Romanians who were allowed to travel in the Communist era but it is unlikely to be true of all. The *Securitate* and the DIE were selective in their interest in Romanians wanting to travel abroad and it is doubtful whether they had the resources to charge every traveller with a mission. Even if they did, it cannot be verified that everyone so ordered actually complied.

Silviu Brucan presents as points of fact the figure of 'almost 700,000 informers...and about 10,000 agents for street surveillance, just in Bucharest' at the time of Ceaușescu's overthrow.¹¹ Virgil Măgureanu, head of the SRJ, offered the national figure of 400,000¹² but only access to the relevant files will permit confirmation of these claims. A reliable network of informers is crucial to the success of any security service and the *Securitate* had no qualms about squeezing as much information as possible from the 216 informers of the Gestapo and the 240 *agents provocateurs* of the *Siguranța* who were convicted of 'damaging the workers' movement and sent to prison in 1950. On the other hand, the new *Securitate* of 1948 retained 417 of the 830 informers of the Second Bureau of Military Counter-Intelligence while the rest were jailed. By the beginning of 1951, the *Securitate* built up its network of informers to 42,187. This number grew steadily over the years and although a nation-wide figure has yet to be revealed, the publication of details from the Sibiu county inspectorate of the *Securitate* gave some idea of the scale of informing. The number of informers in the records of the latter in 1989 was 10,500, of whom more than half were active during the days of the Revolution. In relation to the adult population of the county (325,000), the figure represents roughly one in thirty. However, if one includes the informers

¹¹ Brucan, *Generația irosită*, p. 198.

¹² *Cuvîntul*, 18-24 August 1992.

working for the militia, whose numbers have not been released, the percentage would rise considerably.¹³

In 1972, Maj. Gen. Constandache, the co-ordinator of the Centre for Information and Documentation of the then Council for State Security, sent all the county inspectorates of the CSS standard forms on which details of the sources of information of the *Securitate* were to be entered. This information remained stored in the computer banks of the CID. The informers were classified in four categories: hosts (*gazde*), collaborators (*colaboratori*), informers (*informatori*) and residents (*rezidenți*). The first category was those who, willingly or not, placed their homes at the disposal of the *Securitate* officer to enable him to meet his source in secret. The proportion of hosts to the other types of informer was one in twenty. The second group, the collaborators, represented almost half the informers. These met officers from time to time and provided them with information which they signed. Those who agreed to give information on a regular basis signed an undertaking to this effect (*angajament*). They were then given a cover name. The last group, the residents, was made up of people whose social position gave them the possibility of building up their own small network of informers. Many of them were retired *Securitate* officers.

Party members who served as informers formed a separate group. They could only be used with the permission of the local Party and their collaboration had to be requested by the head of the *Securitate* inspectorate. A list of such informers was kept by the municipal Party secretary or by the deputy county secretary. All information, except that obtained by Directorate VI for penal investigation, was paid for after its value was assessed by the bureau for analysis. The reasons for collaboration have been outlined above but during the period 1968-73, that is, after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the numbers who did so from conviction increased. After that date, such altruism waned, and by 1988 some *Securitate* officers stooped to the most abject form of blackmail in order to meet their target of recruits. They were to be found everywhere, even in old people's homes and schools: in the *Securitate* records in Sibiu, the names of ninety-eight children between the ages of nine and sixteen were found.¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

It has been argued that the full disclosure of the scale of collaboration with the *Securitate* demanded in some quarters of Romanian society is likely to undermine the fragile stability which had come to the country by fostering recrimination and opening the wounds of guilt in complicity with the Ceaușescu regime which many older Romanians prefer to leave to heal. This author does not believe this to be the case. It is a sad reality that to some Romanians acts of an ignominious nature are regarded as proofs of dexterity and therefore to be admired. The Romanian government's own lethargy in bringing to trial those in the *Securitate* suspected of murder and torture is itself a reflection of a general apathy amongst Romanians about the sufferings of the past and the abuses committed. Confronting the past is not an issue in Romania; only when it becomes so will the spiritual cleansing of complicity in the Communist past which the Revolution provided cease to be tarnished by that same indifference which facilitated Ceaușescu's abuses of human rights and dignity. And in confronting that past, two forms of guilt will be established: that of acts committed and that of acts omitted.

The first pre-requisite for bringing to an end an era stained with arbitrariness is to re-establish the respect for law. After the Revolution, much of the oppressive legislation of the Ceaușescu period was removed. Freedom to travel abroad was instituted, the death penalty abolished and all political prisoners given amnesty. The great advertisement for democratic progress was the holding of multi-party elections in May 1990 and September 1992. However, the earlier of these elections was marred by acts of violence and intimidation during the election campaign and reports of malpractice during the voting. In September 1991, the elected government of Petre Roman was forced to resign; this was a result of pressure from street demonstrations by miners and not as a consequence of a vote of no confidence in parliament.

Since the Revolution, there have been three major episodes of organised violence in which evidence of official complicity was discovered and these have largely gone unpunished by the law. The first of these episodes took place in Tîrgu Mureș in Transylvania. The violence erupted on the evening of 19 March when a crowd of several hundred people, many of them carrying

banners of the ultranationalist Romanian association, *Vatra Românească* (Romanian Hearth), stormed the local headquarters of the Hungarian Democratic Union Party and sacked the building. They beat Party officials as they tried to leave. On the following day, as some 5,000 Hungarians and Romanians staged a peaceful demonstration against the violence of the previous evening, they were charged by a crowd of some 2,000 armed with scythes and clubs. The attack left six people dead. Suspicions that members of the former *Securitate* were involved in the violence were fuelled by the failure of the authorities, both at local and national level, to take any action before and during the clashes. A parliamentary inquiry into the events did not identify the forces behind them.

The failure to bring to book those responsible for organised political violence was also manifested in the report on the second episode, the miners' invasion of Bucharest in June 1990. The inability of the police to disperse rioters who on 13 June attacked the police headquarters, the offices of Romanian television and the Foreign Ministry prompted the interim President, Ion Iliescu, to appeal to miners from the Jiu Valley to defend the government. Special trains were laid on to bring some 10,000 miners to Bucharest at dawn on 14 June armed with wooden staves and iron bars. They were joined by vigilantes, some of whom were later identified as belonging to the *Securitate*. For two days they terrorised the population of the capital, attacking anyone they suspected of opposition to the government. These rampaging hordes were directed by persons unknown to the headquarters of the major opposition parties which they ransacked, to the offices of opposition newspapers where they threatened the staff, and to the Institute of Architecture where they beat students. A number of students were carried off by the miners, handed over to the police and held in custody for several weeks.

Once again, the nature of events raised a number of questions to which a satisfactory answer has yet to be given, despite the government's presentation of the findings of a parliamentary enquiry. The most pressing of these was the role played by several members of the *Securitate* who were identified on camera when beating students and by-standers and who were widely suspected of being members of the new security service, the SRI. No action has been taken against these officers.

The whole question of the SRI's accountability was raised by members of parliament and addressed in 1991. Steps to make the SRI accountable by codifying its powers were taken in the National Security Law passed on 26 July 1991. Authority for the SRI to break the law, necessary in the interests of national security, is given in Article 13 and certification of this need is provided by warrants of six months' duration, issued by 'procurators especially designated by the procurator-general of Romania'. The law does not specify what standing these procurators should have and there is no mechanism for the investigation of complaints. A system of judicial supervision of the exercise of warrants is therefore lacking in the law.

If these safeguards are wanting, there is no lack of government bodies authorised to run security services. Articles 6, 8 and 9 stipulate that the SRI, the SIE (the Foreign Intelligence Service), the SPP (the special protection group for the President, ministers and foreign dignitaries), the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of the Interior (which has a Central Intelligence Unit with the call-sign UM 0215), and the Ministry of Justice (with its own intelligence service) are all empowered to carry out activity related to the defence of national security. However, there is no single minister, as in the case of Britain, to whom bodies involved in national security are responsible. In the absence of such a minister, security operations run the risk of being duplicated, confused and unaccountable. The only co-ordinating power rests with the Supreme Defence Council, a collective body which appears to have no constitutional link with parliament.

The pernicious effects of this lack of supervision of the SRI were demonstrated during the third episode of organised violence. This involved another miners' invasion of Bucharest, this time in September 1991. From revelations made by Virgil Măgureanu, the SRI head, in answer to questions from members of parliament about the miners' actions, it was clear that he had advised President Iliescu to force Prime Minister Roman's resignation. The power of both the SRI and the police (*poliția*) depends on the stringency of parliamentary and judicial supervision. As a result, much discretionary power lies in the hands of individual officers. Allowing for retirements and recruitment of new, young officers, the personnel of both the SRI and the police still has at its core the *Securitate* and the militia. In the senior positions of both bodies,

rotation has been practised, with transfers across the various divisions of the police and movement of officers from one county inspectorate of the SRI to another in an attempt to avoid the charge that the personnel are the same as previously. This movement of officers has taken place principally in the senior ranks. An illustration of these points about personnel and practices was offered by the revelations of Col. Gheorghe Moldovan, a former DSS officer in the town of Baia Mare who became head of the SRI in the town in 1990. In 1991, he was dismissed from his post after disclosing that the SRI tapped telephone conversations illegally. In the same year, he received orders to place taps in the telephone exchange in Baia Mare and refused. He alleged that all SRI units in the major towns were instructed by SRI headquarters to reconnect old *Securitate* listening centres to exchanges.¹⁵

While some progress has been made in establishing the checks and balances vital to any democracy, such as the creation of a free press, much remains to be done in making the legal system independent of government. Most of the judges and lawyers were appointed during the Ceauşescu period and some continue to impose long sentences for political offences, such as 'spreading anti-democratic propaganda', which are inherited from the Communist penal code. The greatest threat to a democratic system comes, however, from the difficulty faced by of the post-Ceauşescu governments in creating a minimum level of economic prosperity and in dispelling the feeling, widespread in the Romanian electorate, that the advantages of the market economy outweigh its disadvantages. Rising unemployment, a staggering increase in crime and a World Bank estimate that 40 per cent of Romanians lived below the poverty line in 1993 made the population ripe for populist mobilisation.

In this atmosphere, former supporters of Ceauşescu, including a number of notorious sycophants, have adopted his nationalist postures and given them a more extreme form. This ultranationalism has several features. First, it seeks to place the blame for the

¹⁵ *Evenimentul Zilei*, 17 May 1993. Another senior *Securitate* officer who simply donned the cap of an SRI chief was Col. F. Viziteu, who was responsible for the interrogation of the group of engineers at the machine tool factory in Iaşi who had planned the anti-Ceauşescu demonstration in the city centre on 14 December 1989. In 1990 he was made SRI head Iaşi. *România liberă*, 18 January 1994, p. 9.

economic difficulties experienced in the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy on 'foreigners'. Secondly, it ascribes the country's suffering under Communism to Jews and Hungarians on the grounds that the latter occupied leading positions in the Communist Party during the Stalinist era, conveniently overlooking their replacement by Ceașescu with Romanians.¹⁶ Thirdly, sycophants of Ceașescu, notably those associated with the former weekly *Săptămîna*, have become the most ardent advocates of extreme nationalism in an attempt to deflect attention from their part in bolstering the former dictator. A guilt complex felt by some Romanians over their acquiescence or collusion with the Communist regime has been exploited by the ultranationalists, and in an effort to cleanse them of this sense of culpability 'scapegoats' have been produced.

This need for scapegoats became so great that, although the Jewish population has shrunk to 9,100 according to the census of 7 January 1992, Jews have become a target and anti-Semitic views are regularly expressed in two national weeklies, *România Mare* and *Europa*. The former was set up by two *Săptămîna* publicists, Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Eugen Barbu, and the latter journal is alleged to be funded by the *Europa Nova* publishing group, owned by Iosif Constantin Drăgan. *România Mare* spawned a political party, the Greater Romania Party, on 20 June 1991, which registered C.V. Tudor as its President.

Acts of violence have preceded and accompanied the anti-Semitic propaganda of the two weeklies. In January 1990, the headquarters of the Jewish community in the town of Brașov had its windows smashed; in May, twenty-eight graves were desecrated in the Jewish cemetery in Tîrgu-Mureș and eight in a cemetery in the Danube port of Galați. In January 1991, nineteen graves were damaged in Bucharest and several others in Alba Iulia. These attacks, coupled with the publication of anti-Semitic pamphlets

¹⁶ Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the editor of the extreme nationalist weekly *România Mare* and a notorious sycophant of Ceașescu, published in the edition of 25 October 1991 a selective list of officers of the DGSP (the forerunner of the DSS), established in 1948. Under the title 'Who brought Bolshevism, terror and crime to Romania?', it gave the impression that it was staffed largely by Hungarians and Russian-speaking Jews. As shown in Chapter 2 this was a distortion of the ethnic composition of the DGSP.

and fly-posting in several towns of anti-Semitic posters led Rabbi Rosen to protest vigorously to President Ion Iliescu. Anti-Semitic and anti-Hungarian feeling was wielded as a weapon by *România Mare* and *Europa* in a concerted attack throughout the spring and summer of 1991 on the government of Petre Roman, who has Jewish blood. In a convergence of interest shared with the opponents of the rapid pace of economic reform within the ruling National Salvation Front Party, both weeklies seized on the pro-Western sentiments of Roman and accused him of betraying the nation's interests to the West. In April 1991, Ilie Neacșu, a former regional Communist Party propaganda secretary who became editor of *Europa*, accused Roman of corruption and called for the dismissal from the government of anyone belonging to the national minorities. In early September both *România Mare* and *Europa* carried articles insisting on Roman's Jewish origin, and it is consequently difficult not to see a connection between this anti-Roman campaign and the arrival of the miners in Bucharest demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister. Roman's offer to resign was accepted by Iliescu on 26 September 1991.

These acts and manifestations of anti-Semitism eventually forced the government to take a stand, just as Ceaușescu had done in April 1981. The parallel does not end there. Significantly, the source of the anti-Semitism was the same as in 1980: a group within the Communist Party which was encouraged by Ceaușescu's postures to promote nationalism in the search for legitimacy or greater popular acquiescence in the regime. After the Revolution, that group, represented by Eugen Barbu and Tudor, took up once again their trumpets of anti-Semitism, proof of the maxim that 'you cannot keep a good man down'. On 25 March 1992 the Romanian government issued a statement, noting with: 'deep concern the presence of certain views and manifestations of a chauvinist of anti-Semite character in several publications edited in our country. The Romanian government rejects and condemns such manifestations, as well as any attempt to promote, through the press media in Romania, extremist accents of an Iron Guardist or Fascist nature.' Despite this condemnation, no effective measures have been taken by the government to curb the anti-Semitism of sections of the Romania media.

The powerful mobilising capacity of ultranationalism is most

potently exemplified by the rapid rise of the *Vatra Românească* movement.¹⁷ This force of ultranationalism is emotional, being based on fear, and provides a definition of group identity. As such, it offers a ready-made vehicle to populist politicians who are willing to exploit its ability not only to include people within its definition but also to exclude them. It was primarily fear which prompted the creation of *Vatra* at the beginning of February 1990, as indeed its first president Radu Ceantea pointed out.¹⁸ By playing on mistrust of Hungarian motives, fear of Hungarian revanchism, concern about an erosion of Romanian dominance in Transylvania and general unease about the economic future, *Vatra* and its political wing, the Party for National Unity of the Romanians (PUNR), trebled its vote and seats in the September 1992 parliamentary elections, emerging as the fourth largest party.

The dependence of the government of the PDSR on a parliamentary majority on the PUNR and the Greater Romania Party as a result of these elections explained why the progress in economic reform, privatisation and restructuring remained checkered throughout 1993. Both of the latter parties are against any significant privatisation involving foreign capital. An indictment of the lethargy which characterised the government's reform programme was the success of a pyramid investment scheme called *Caritas*, set up in Cluj in 1992 and widely suspected as being a conduit for funds for the PUNR. It was estimated to have attracted over 30 per cent of the population's savings by 1993. The scheme's success was one manifestation of the search for a miraculous cure by large sections of the population for the economic malaise. Another were the extraordinary queues of more than 150,000 persons which formed in Bucharest in October 1993 to touch the relics of an Orthodox saint said to have miraculous properties.

The ultranationalists' attempts to draw upon this strong religious sentiment in order to identify more closely with Romanian society have been aided by sections of the Orthodox clergy themselves.

¹⁷ For details see D. Deletant, 'The Role of *Vatra Românească* in Transylvania', *RFE/RL Research Institute Report on Eastern Europe*, vol. 2, no. 5 (1 February 1991), pp. 28-37; T. Gallagher, '*Vatra Românească* and Resurgent Nationalism in Romania', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Oct. 1992), pp. 570-99.

¹⁸ *Cuvîntul Liber* (Tîrgu Mureș), 17 July 1990, p. 1.

Many Orthodox priests have aligned themselves with the *Vatra* movement and have stressed the role their church has played in preserving the identity of Romanians. Ultimately the key to the ultranationalists' future lies as much in events on Romania's borders as within them. The feelings of insecurity generated by the turbulence in the former Yugoslavia, in the Ukraine, Moldova and Russia, have played into the hands of the ultranationalists, who offer the comfort of an exclusive, uniform solidarity. At the same time, the West's propensity to place Romania in the second division of former Communist states, behind a first division comprising the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, will only cause the Romanians to turn in upon themselves and make them more vulnerable to the blandishments of the ultranationalists. Abandonment by the Western democracies in the 1990s is likely to produce similar results to those of the late 1930s: a country in which xenophobic ultranationalism is raised to the level of state policy. And to police that policy the *Securitate* will be resurrected.

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